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Everybody's Magazine

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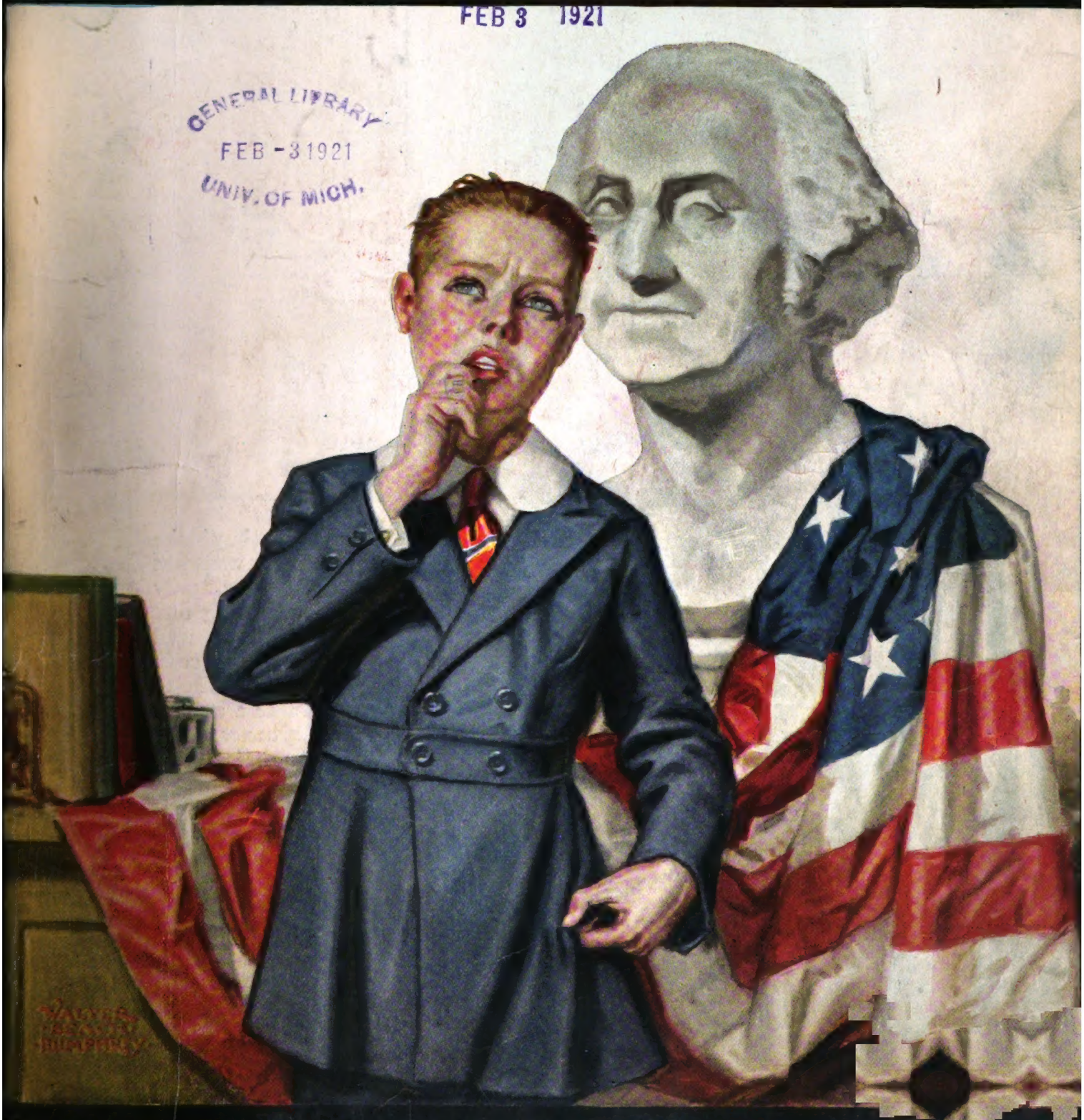

Short Stories

EDWIN BALMER CHARLES SAXBY LUCIAN CARY
GERALD BEAUMONT FRANK SWINNERTON

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EVERYBODY'S MAGAZINE

Number 2 FEBRUARY, 1921 Vol. XLIV

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COVER by WALTER BEACH HUMPHREYS

GERALD BEAUMONT

EDWIN BALMER

LUCIAN CARY

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With

EVERYBODY'S PUBLISHERS

JUST because there is not the least chance in the world of diminishing by it the homage which we shall all pay two great Americans whose birthdays fall within this short February month, we want to suggest it as a good time to read and think a bit about another great American, contemporaneous with Washington, the month of whose birth is unmarked and unknown to most of us:

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN

It is probably a fact that if Franklin had never flown that famous kite, with electrical results, his place in the memory and hearts of present-day Americans would have been far different.

As it is, any boy or girl, and almost any man or woman, brought to attention by the crisp inquiry, "Who was Franklin, and what did he do?" responds, "He was a philosopher (with varying pronunciation) and he flew a kite which brought down electricity from the sky for the first time."

Variations of this reply would be unimportant. Yet the truth is that Franklin did more than any single American of his time to lay the foundation for the structure of American independence which Washington completed with his victories.

For years prior to the Revolution, this stout-hearted old man toiled in England, far away from family and friends, to create a sympathy with the colonists, which found its perfect fruition in the refusal of the English to prosecute the war further following the surrender of Cornwallis at Yorktown.

The tale of Franklin's efforts, his carefully planned contact with the best men and minds in English life, some reached and grappled by means of his scientific attainments, some by his wide knowledge of philosophy and literature, and perhaps more by his untiring good fellowship — all this is a romance unapproached in fiction.

Imagine this physically rather grotesque old man now visiting Lord Kames, the leading philosopher of the time, to discuss with him the fundamentals of civilization, now entertaining and astonishing a party gathered about the pond on the estate of a great nobleman, by demonstrating how oil will calm troubled waters (he had a little compartment made in his walking-stick to hold the oil for these demonstrations, and in grave mockery would wave the stick like a magician before releasing the oil); and again see him alone and at ease with a little English girl, whom he came to love warmly, telling simple stories or making acrostics and magic numbers, the last an art in which he has never had an equal.

So it went. One day with the enthralled scholars at Oxford, and the next before a hostile committee at Parliament, pleading the cause of the colonists, urging their kinship, the necessity of supplies to prosecute bloody border warfares, and insisting upon the opportunity of a vast commerce for the mother country.

Interesting to note here, along with the derision with which these skeptics greeted his prediction one May day in 1760, that England's exports of $7,400,000 to the colonies the year previous would treble in fifty years, the final fact that these same colonies, become an independent nation, loaned to the mother country in her war for life with Germany $4,277,000,000 in some two years.

Franklin's activities in France in behalf of the colonies, at last at war, are probably better known to most of us, but it is still doubtful if we have a true appreciation of the work there of this man, still older, broken in health, dragging himself from the Court of Louis to the famous salons — which his fastidious fellow American Commissioner from Boston would not visit — and then to French homes, great and humble, going everywhere, and everywhere making friends for the struggling young Republic. From the Court and Government he wrung ships, troops, money and supplies, and from the circles of young France he brought forth and fired with zeal for our cause, scores of young Frenchmen like Lafayette.

So since this rather lonely, even if powerful, figure in our early history and struggles has no month of his own, let's adopt him, this once at least, in the month of Washington and Lincoln.

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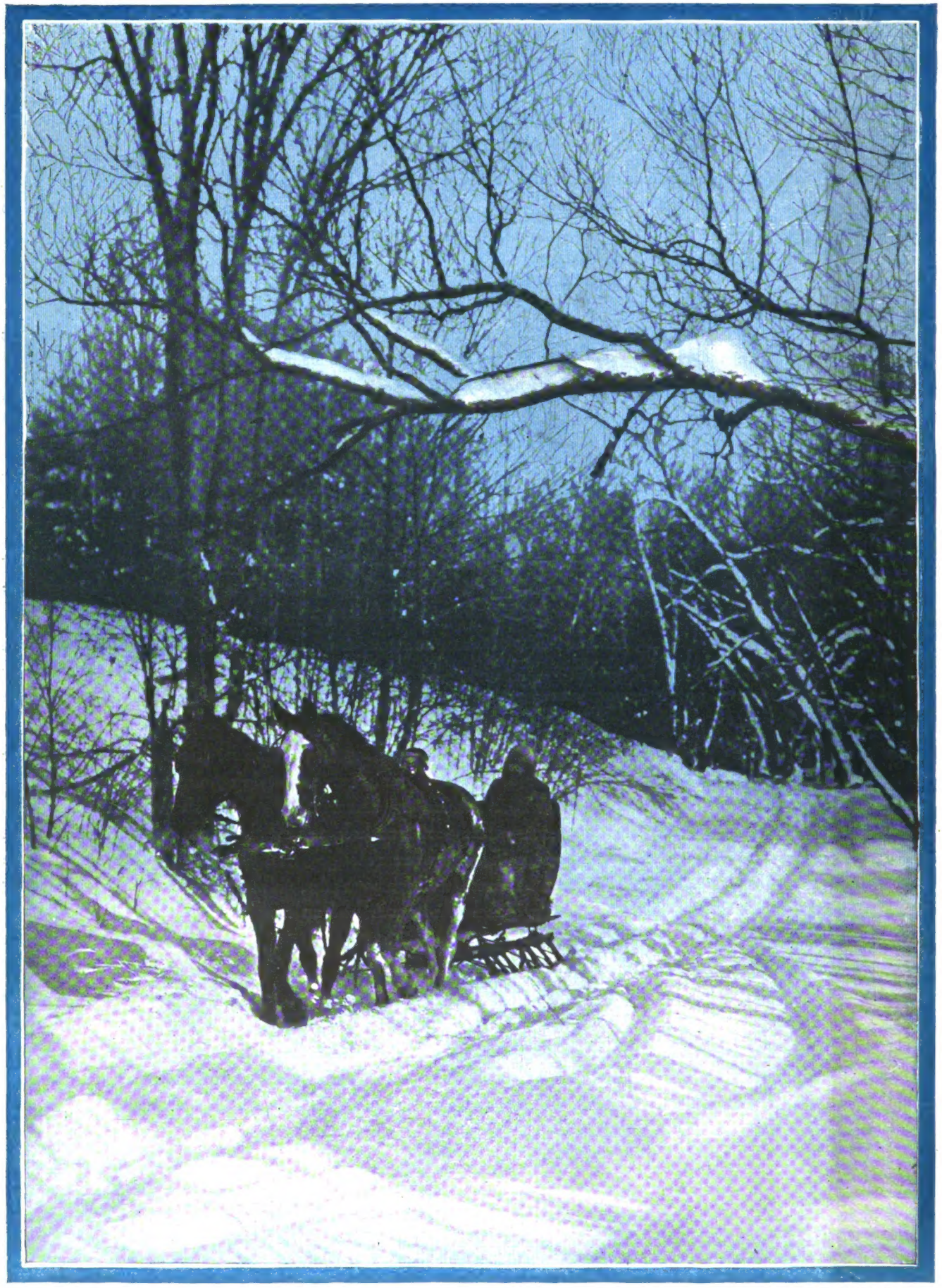

Photo by Edwin Levick.

Twelve hundred miles from Palm Beach—and still going.

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Everybody's Magazine

NUMBER TWO FEBRUARY, 1921 VOLUME XLIV

"Hush, then, and I will pull you through," she said in broken English. "But remember that you speak no French."

The Singer of the Night

By Charles Saxby

A Two-Part Story—Part I

THE moment that Vallator entered the inn he regretted it.

Those furtive night marches, those day-long concealments in ditch or wood, had exhausted him to a point of almost desperation. Now, with the dusk, the rain had come down, chilling the warmth of the southern spring, and through the wet darkness the lighted window had gleamed as a beacon of refuge. But even as he lifted the latch there came to him the conviction that, in thus seeking shelter for the first time since his escape, he was doing something irrevocable.

It was too late to draw back now. He might have been seen, and to retreat would provoke more comment than to go on. In fact, retreat was already cut off, for from far up the road came the throb of an approaching motor. He summoned an assumption of unconcern, wreathing his mouth in a wisp of his former grin as he repeated to himself:

"I am Vallator—Michael Vallator, of New York and the American Ambulance Corps, out on a week's leave. Michael Vallator—that is who I am."

Why he had chosen that especial name he could hardly say. He did not even like it particularly, suspecting it of a slightly theatrical taint. But he had to have a name of some sort and that one had arrived of itself, camping so persistently on the confines of his consciousness that he had at last accepted it through sheer weariness. It was just a part of the general strangeness of the past two years, in which everything he had ever been, even

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to his name, seemed to have been stripped from him in the mill of circumstances.

"I am Michael Vallator."

He repeated it again, seeking to charge his atmosphere with the sense of this new personality, secretly wondering as to what sort of a fellow this Vallator might turn out to be. It was terribly confusing to have, at the age of twenty-six, to turn right about and be some one different from who you really were. The only familiar thing about him was the Red Cross outfit on which he was relying to be his pass across this war-torn France, where a young man untagged by some kind of uniform was an object of immediate suspicion.

It was such an unbelievable chance that had made of him a fugitive through and from this land which he loved so much and which he had done his best to serve; a fugitive, proscribed as dangerous, but to the eye just a young fellow of that smooth blond pallor so distinctive of American youth; a harmless-looking figure enough as, rain-drenched and hungry, he hesitated at the door of this Provençal inn. But he knew only too well the steel smooth swiftness of that hand of government which, were he suspected, would be shot forth to draw him back.

Under the menace of it he looked around, seeking some alternative shelter. But the inn seemed to stand alone in the wide plain. Just a mass of whitewashed gables, hung with budding grape-vines, its windows, in contrast to that ecclesiastical looking sign of "L'Auberge des Trois Maries," gleaming like festively reddened eyes, their wink of invitation accented by the sound of music from within.

Half an orchestra, it seemed; the crash of cymbals, the wheeze of an accordion, punctuated by thuds on a drum, and above it, high and clear, a woman's voice singing "Le Chanson de Florian."

That voice alone would have told Vallator that he had reached the Midi, floating out in warm strains, defying the chill of the rain and the ghostly rattle of the poplar trees shivering overhead in scant leafage of April; the Midi, that tawny land of sun and wine for which every bone of him had ached these two years past; not much sun just now, and the only warmth behind those doors where the woman sang of her wandering love:

"Ah, s'il est dans votre village.
Un berger sensible et charmant."

Its appeal reached down into all those human longings which Vallator had sternly decided to keep in repression until safe across the frontier. He had pictured himself as traveling by night, lying hid by day, slipping wraithlike across the width of France by its most untenanted paths. But now, in his fatigue, this great plain, gray and dripping under the rain, rather appalled him.

AFTER all, he could not hope to pass forever unseen. He must accustom himself to meeting people, if only to buy food. And down here, two hundred miles from the front, on the very verge of that persistent waste of the Camargue, there would be less question than almost anywhere else. His uniform, backed by a little grinning bluff——

He paused, and his grin turned bitter as he thought of the unbelievableness of his position: A prisoner because he had become too prominent; a fugitive because he had served too well. Truly it is dangerous to be lifted up during a storm, since it is the high spots that catch the lightning. He quivered as he remembered the astonishing bolt which had struck himself; the lightning of a government under all the terrific necessity of war.

He could feel again all his helplessness as that net had closed about him. He could almost see, outlined there against the darkness, that tired, kindly, but withal implacable face of the man from whom that bolt had fallen. He could hear again those sentences coming from those lips in the still air of that official Paris room.

"Believe me, monsieur, we deeply appreciate what you have done. We thank you for it and in time we hope to be able to reward you——"

THEN, regardless of Vallator's ejaculation that he neither wished for nor expected any reward, those remorseless syllables had gone on:

"But, though it pains us, this must be done, if only for your own safety. There are those who know of you and what you did for us and, believe me, there is danger for you from them. Then again, you are too important to be permitted loose about. At all costs we must preserve the morale of our people, and in your case it is best that you remain unknown until the end of the war. If you became known, much of the effect of your deed would be destroyed. And so, for the present, you must disappear."

"Disappear—to where?"

That had been Vallator's own voice, in harsh question, and the answer had come smoothly back, invincibly authoritative: "That will be our affair."

The extraordinary power of words to order a life—just a sentence from a tired-faced man hunched in a chair behind a great desk: "You will disappear."

Hardly more than a murmur, but it had been enough. Vallator had disappeared indeed these last two years; even his name had gone, for it had been by a number only that he was known in the great internment camp near Lyon, nor had any known who he was nor the reasons for the especial considerations shown him. But he had to admit that they were right. With the fate of the country at stake they could take no chances. Of course he meant well enough, but in these days there was no telling what a man might not be just about to do. He had good reasons for knowing that.

Of course, if they caught him again——

He half took his hand from the latch as he wondered what might not await him on the other side of that door. Doors were such queer things one never knew what they might not let you out of or into. Emergency was what he most feared just then, and who could predict the possible emergencies of an opened door? Perhaps it would be better to face a night of cold and hunger in one of the scattered haystacks of the Camargue fringe. But that motor was closer now upon the road, cutting off retreat. Then, from within, came a fresh burst of rhythmic sound—and the woman's voice rose again:

"C'est encore lui; rendez le moi
J'ai son amour, il à ma foi."

Its warm allure brought again that urge for companionship sweeping through his panic of possible capture. His fingers closed again on the latch and the next moment, almost against his own will, it seemed, found himself inside.

A long room, low and heavily beamed, its whitewashed walls festooned by strings of dried herbs, lit only by a dim lamp of war-time economy and the flicker of a frugal fire. A sanded floor, a litter of rough tables, the reek of French tobacco and warm flesh fresh from the fields. A mass of men's shoulders in silhouette against the light, their eyes all turned toward the spot where the musicians held their stage.

A man and a woman; an old man and a young woman, or, rather, a girl; the old man bent and humped, his twisted body grotesquely clad in flapping rags, once gaudily colored, but now dulled and stained. As though that motley insult to his old bones were not enough, he was girt about with a drum and cymbals, an accordion between his hands, reed pipes strapped to his chin and a veritable fool's cap of jangling bells on his mane of white hair.

A striking figure he made; an irresistible comedy in every gesture, yet something sinsiter withal, and Vallator's gaze turned quickly to the girl. A slight little thing, in a faded ballet dress; barely twenty as yet, her curves thinly exquisite with that deceiving effect of frailness of the trained dancer; her face, under a mass of smoothly parted black hair, an olive-tinted triangle lit by the flash of teeth and eyes darkly enormous in their deep settings.

An oddly assorted pair, with only the stamp of a common vagabondage to unite them. As they sang and mimed in all the frank trickery of their costumes, they looked like the denizens of some other world of painted unrealities. They might have stepped bodily from the stage of some wandering puppet *guignol;* Scaramouche and Columbine, those immemorial personations of chance and charm, singing to a gaping crowd of Provençal peasants; Chance, grown a little rusty in the joints, but with who knew what tricks up his sleeve of grinning tragedy or tragic joke; Charm, gliding airily on tiptoe in well-darned tights and skirts of frayed tulle.

A BUTTERFLY, such was Vallator's first impression of her: a glancing thing of sun and glitter overtaken by unaccustomed night. He wished she would not look at him so; she was drawing all those other eyes toward him as heads turned to follow her fixed gaze. There was a woman, too, advancing toward him with that falsely smiling, harpy air that seems inseparable from landladies all the world over.

The moment of test had come and Vallator felt the grin upon his lips stiffening in sheer panic. It was that horrible sense of escape that was the trouble, that consciousness of being a fugitive which he could feel sticking invisibly out all about himself. The problem was within him really, and wherever he went he would carry it. Those turned heads, those glances of suspicion, that woman advancing for his papers, they would accompany him, in different forms, all across the land. Wherever he went there would be just such moments.

"Perhaps monsieur will kindly show his *billets.*"

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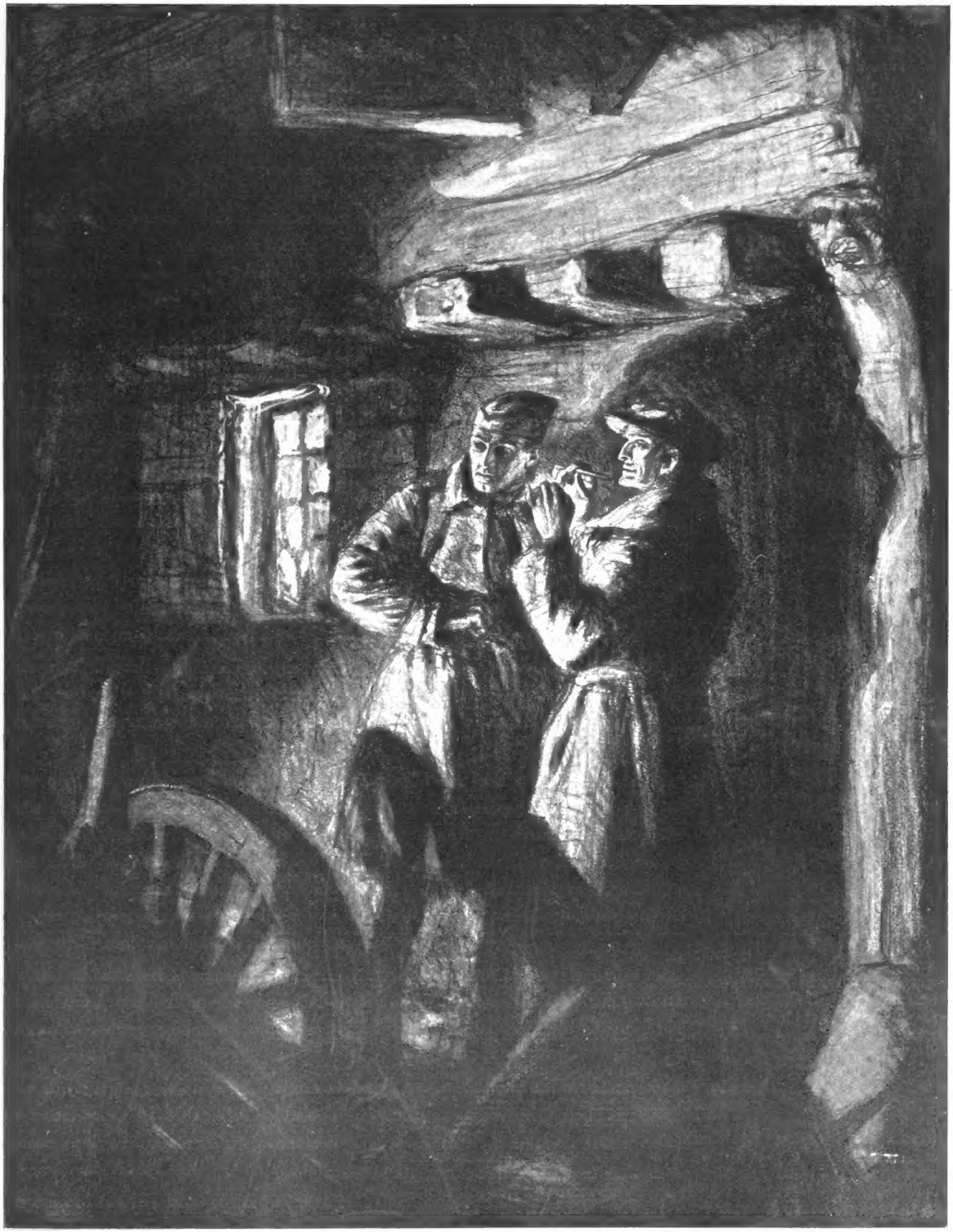

Then came the snap and sparkle of his electric lighter and from the front seat of the car a shadowy figure shot out like an uncoiled spring.

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It was a demand, and before its cold question his bluff was falling from him, leaving him stripped in the damning absence of any papers or adequate explanation of himself. In those two years of internment he had almost forgotten how to meet people and he felt as much at sea as a young monk suddenly thrust into a ballroom. Even his fluent French forsook him and from a dry throat came a stammering:

"My papers—I mislaid——"

It was that singing girl who was really responsible for all this, he thought furiously. Except for that stare of hers he would have had a minute or two in which to collect himself after entering. How strangely she was looking at him now, as if she were weighing him in the balance of those enormous eyes, somber now that their professional impudence had faded. Then suddenly, while he tried to speak, they lit up, as with the turning of some inner switch of brilliance, and her laughter cut the tense silence:

"*Oh, mon Dieu, it is an American!*"

"*A-h, un Américain—hein?*" came the murmured response from all about.

The word was like a talisman,warming the atmosphere to satisfaction. With the quickness of the trained performer the girl seized her opportunity.

"Yes, see, it is a Sam-mee, come to help save our France. And see too—" she paused the fraction of an instant, with a warning glance to Vallator, "he does not understand our French. Then it is to me to talk with him. *Ecco mi*, la 'Gina Antonelli—or Régine Antoine, if you so prefer it this side of Italy. I, the star of nations, who speak every tongue in Christendom—which includes not the German."

She had them grinning now as, impudently brilliant, she pushed her way toward Vallator through the throng of risen men; a countryside assembly, with something of the rough tang of the wine produced by their sun-warmed soil; peasants, middle-aged and gnarled, with here and there a disabled *poilu* proudly wearing his uniform.

"Let me by, then, you lumps," she pattered on. "Do you think I am a Boche? They do not say, '*on ne passe pas*' to us; we go everywhere, il Gran' Amato and I. We have sung and danced in the very trenches, yes. Ah, I swear to you that the Kaiser shall eat his Christmas dinner in Paris yet—and he shall eat it at the Salpétriere."

POURING out her rapid patter she reached Vallator, and her first words to him came in startling contrast to the gaiety with which she covered them.

"Hush, then, and I will pull you through," she said in a broken English. "But remember that you speak no French."

"Why do you do this for me?" he asked in surprise. "How do you know but I may be a spy?"

"Spies have always their papers, and their stories too, all *en règle*. Tell me quickly, what is it that you seek?"

Vallator hesitated as on his lips trembled the elaborate fiction with which he had meant to account for himself; but somehow up through it came the truth. With a desperate hazard he threw himself on the discretion of this wandering fly-by-night, boldly singing her way, in rouge and frayed tulle, across a war-torn country.

"If you must know, I seek the Spanish frontier," he breathed.

They faced each other in that moment of confession and into the girl's regard crept an added understanding. Covering it quickly with a stage laugh, she nodded back.

"And if you must know, then so do we; the old Amato there and myself. Oh, we have served well la France, and yet—" She paused with a shrug, a little grimace. "So you see I know that there may be excuses for any one in these days."

"But who then is he, this *monsieur Américain?*" asked the landlady, cutting acidly across their conversation, suspicious of its length and suspicious also, in her unassailable virtue, of the girl herself.

"IT IS as I supposed, madame," Régine answered, with a disarming humility that seemed to admit everything the woman might be suspecting of her. "How fortunate it is that I can speak his tongue, that even such as I am can be of some help. He is of *la Croix Rouge* and he is of the entourage of the great lady who passed through here to-day and who supports the new hospital at Grex. Madame la Comtesse—no—la Duchesse——"

"The Duchess d'Abrantez?" prompted Vallator in astonishment. "Was she here to-day?"

"See, he knows her name," cried the girl, so much as though that alone proved everything that it actually carried conviction.

Vallator's brain spun once more at the surprise of that name spoken in this out-of-the-world place. Twice before it had arisen in his life, each time in a crisis of his experience, and here it was again. He wondered what new shift it might portend now.

"Sit down," the girl whispered. "Sit down and keep quiet."

"But are you safe in helping me like this?" he asked.

Hands on hips she returned him a grimace, a flirt of those flaring puffs of tulle that passed as a skirt. "Safe? Bah; the only safe ones these days are the dead ones, and I—*voyez donc*—am much alive."

"Even lives are at stake these days," he returned gravely.

"And do you then think mine is so joyous that I value it so much?" she retorted. "But we must talk no longer. Sit down and I will stir things up and keep their minds off you."

Again she plunged blithely among the seated men, her gaze roving over their faces with a keenness hidden by a mask of laughter.

"Another song? No, *mes braves*, even poor Régine must rest sometimes. It is the turn now of the old Amato. He shall tell you a story, a true story of war, from him who has seen it all. Come, then, old cabbage, since we sing for our suppers it is to you to entertain. Behold him, then! Il Gran' Amato, who has thrilled La Scala, and even Rome itself—perhaps."

With a tiptoe pirouette and another of those ringing laughs, she stopped, and the old musician rose from his corner. In the subtle instinct of the actor he had laid aside his fool's trappings of music and covered his gaudy rags with a black cloak. It faded into the shadows behind him, leaving only his face, seamed and haggard under its shock of white hair, standing out in the glow of the fire.

A startling metamorphosis it was, from that figure of sinister jest to the dignity of age and trained art. His voice was only a wreck of what it might once have been, but even so it was amazing in its gamut of tones. As he heard it Vallator knew he was listening to an artist and he wondered that the old fellow should be in such a position as this. He seemed actually the Scaramouche he portrayed; the victim of his own bitterly comic chances.

"It is even so, my friends," Amato began, his voice filling the whole room like the sound of a worn-out organ. "We have truly seen. But even more have we heard, and it is of that I will tell you to-night—tell you of that which I have heard even with these ears—even the sounds of the mystic Voice of Verdun itself."

At his words, struck with an astonishment that was almost a physical blow, Vallator sank into a chair.

II

THE room was still, filled with the tense silence that awaits a story; the only movement that of the shadows on the walls dancing in the flicker of the fire, growing more giant and grotesque as they faded into the dimness of the corners.

At his table Vallator found himself mercifully forgotten as all eyes turned toward that seemingly disembodied face of the old actor. Sitting there he seemed, to himself, to be almost two people at once; one of them listening anxiously for the story about to be told, the other trying to collect himself into some semblance of coolness. In entering this inn he felt as if he had stranded on the very coast of chance itself, that strange shore where all the wreckage of the past strands with one, taking on new shapes of astonishment.

The Duchess d'Abrantez. It had been in the wake of that international Franco-American great lady, the idol of the whole Red Cross, that he had slipped from the internment camp, wafted out like a straw in the breeze of her departure from a visit of inspection. It had been so simple that its boldness had never been suspected. Shaving the mustache he had permitted to grow during his two years' imprisonment, he had put on the Red Cross uniform in which none in the camp had ever seen him. Then, with a sheer impudence which was its own passport, came a laughing sprint to the gates as the last motor of the Duchess's party passed out. So great was the magic of her name that none had suspected him to be anything but a belated member of the staff which had accompanied her. He remembered how the sentries had grinned after him as he chased the speeding motors down the road.

And just now that same name, falling from the painted lips of this singing girl, had snatched him from the danger of detection. Two women had aided him this night, though one was, and probably ever would be, unconscious of it. Two women, in almost violent contrast to each other. The one, by her American wealth, her French marriage, perhaps the most powerful woman on all the Allied side. The other—? But merely to ask that question was dangerously near to answering it as well.

Having created her diversion, the girl

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An odd party they made as they trudged onward between the budding vineyards, with Vallator, bent under the drum, shuffling awkwardly in wooden shoes.

was with him again, facing him across the table, her chin cupped in her hands, the thin curves of her chest straining with the pressure of her breath.

"He will keep them busy for a while," she whispered, nodding toward Amato. "Now, then, what of you?"

"Why do you trouble yourself for me?" Vallator demanded again.

"Why? How does one ever know why one does things? Unless—" She shot another glance at him, keen and straight, yet veiled in question. "Oh, well, I will tell you. When you came it was to me as if I knew you. Of course I have never seen you before; but when you entered I knew you. Knew what?" She spread her hands in a feminine bewilderment at what it knows without knowing how it knows it. "Nothing, of course. And yet, I was sure that you were one of us."

"And what is to be one of you?" asked Vallator, and again came that quick flutter of pink finger-tips in infinite non-comprehension.

"How can one say it, how can one even know it? But there are many of us this night wandering France. Fugitives, unaccounted for, yet slipping unharmed where others, more worthy perhaps, are caught. Many of us; we who have been, in some fashion that we do not understand, picked up and thrown back from those whirpools of death at the front."

Vallator stirred uneasily as the girl's words hit strangely close to his own experience.

"And what was it that picked you up and threw you back?" he asked.

"If I tell you, will you believe me?" she countered.

Believe? Vallator fought down the smile, twisted to bitterness, that twitched at his lips. After what had happened to himself he felt as though he could believe almost anything. The fire blazed higher for a moment, setting the shadows to dancing on the walls, and through the silence of attention came the voice of the old actor.

"THAT our France is under the protection of the good God who can doubt?" he was demanding, in a magnetic vehemence. "Have we not had the signs? The Angels of Mons, were they not seen? A dozen men, such as you and I, have sworn to me that they saw them. And the Woman on the White Horse who led us at the Marne; and then again—and it is I who now speak to you; I, il Gran' Amato, with these eyes straining to behold, with these ears wondering, I—even I—heard La Voix de Verdun."

A little shiver passed over the company as he paused, partly from that delicious superstition of the unknown, partly from a keen draft as the door silently opened. But whoever had entered remained there in the shadow, silent and still, a mere shadow himself by the doorway. Another peasant, Vallator thought, too much engrossed with the double interest of the girl and the old man's story to pay much heed.

"La Voix de Verdun, les Anges de Mons," shrugged Régine. "Bah, we are all so good in these days of war. Had I but worn wings I might have been accounted as a saint now. As it is, they say I was of the very devil that day."

"But what did you do?" Vallator asked.

"I did nothing. It was just—how shall I then put it?—that something came to me."

"So something came to you?" It might have been that, under his breath, he added the words "to you also" but the girl had not heard them. They sat silently regarding each other in an understanding as of years. A sudden, mutual comprehension such as can occur only in the world of the fringes of things. A world of frayed fringes and garments scorched by the fires through which its dwellers must pass in entering it.

Régine spoke again. "Yes, something came to me. I suppose I am mad, but I think you will understand me. It is just that understanding that makes you one of us queer wanderers of France. If we do not know each other who will?"

"But what did you do?"

"I danced, that was all. Danced for my children, the soldiers of France, there in the mud amongst the ruins of Toul."

"But you said something came to you?"

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Régine sprang to her feet, the mere memory of it seemingly an electric charge that fired her anew as she poised by the table, her face vividly alive.

"I went crazy perhaps, but I swear to you that never had I been so joyous as that day, with the rain streaming down on blackened walls and the wounded lying all about, awaiting the ambulances. There was a storm overhead, a fearful roll of thunder, and as the lightning came it seemed to set me all ablaze inside here. It was as though the blaze in the sky had entered me, burning out all care and fear. I no longer cared for anything—neither man nor God nor devil. I was just a ball of fire and joy and I danced—ah—never had I danced so—shrieking to the poor Amato to play faster and faster as I went spinning, laughing, bounding——"

She paused for breath, pressing her hands to her breast, dimming a little as she met Vallator's gaze.

"I know how wild this must sound," she faltered. "Poor Régine, talking as though she were really one of the great ones of the dance. But you need not believe me, it is written down in the official reports. And all who saw me remember it well. Those who were whole threw down their rifles and danced with me, and even the wounded, those who could, and many that one would have said could not, rose from their straw in their bandages and joined in."

Her eyes, her hands, her whole lithesome body, rather than her mere words, were telling her story for her. To Vallator came a glimpse of all that she had not the art to say. A glimpse of something rather terrible; the half-insane break of minds too heavily burdened; a wild, bounding creature in rain-drenched tulle; a veritable bacchanale in mud and bloody rags amidst an obscenity of destruction under an apocalyptic sky.

"And after that?" he asked, and her light went out with a cynical shrug.

"They said that I was dangerous. I, *pauvre Régine*, a vagabond of a dancing girl, dangerous! But it was hours before they could restore discipline in that regiment, and so they thrust me out, and old Amato with me, and forbade us ever to enter the war zone again. I, dangerous; *est-ce-que ça ne vous poche pas?*"

BUT in Vallator's ears there dripped again the words that had been spoken to himself: "Too important to be permitted loose about."

He could see the official side of it, all the more since hearing this girl's story. Fugitives, beggars though they might both be, there seemed to be so much more to people than one suspected and in days like these one never knew when it might not come tearing up through one. For the instant he saw himself, and this singer of the by-ways, as a couple of human torches wandering among the mental explosives of a nation at war. Had he been in authority he would certainly have had himself shut up.

"So now you know all about me," said Régine. "Now what of you? I tell you everything and you sit there, with your gray eyes as big as an owl's, saying nothing but 'you-who-you-who?' Are you not then human that you can not talk of yourself?"

To Vallator came an impulse to speak, to pour out all that he had never been able to tell to any one. He had been questioned enough, by generals, by a premier, by a cardinal; but he thought that in this girl, this bit of social chaff blown by every wind of chance, he might perhaps find a more genuine understanding. His lips half parted to speak when the words of the old actor arrested him.

"Wherever the danger was greatest, wherever the pain was most pressing, there we went, I, il Gran' Amato, and my lovely Colombina, la Antonelli; dancing, singing, making joy for our defenders of France. And so, when the time came, we went to Verdun."

Verdun; the old man had been there without a doubt, for in his eyes, as in those of the girl, and, had he but known it, in Vallator's own, gleamed that eery "beyond" look which marks those who witnessed that terrible assault.

"What is it he is telling?" Vallator asked.

"*Quoi donc*, have you not heard the story of *la Voix de Verdun?*" Régine responded.

"NO, I have not heard it," he answered, with a sidewise smile. "Hush then, I want to listen."

"How shall I describe it?" Amato demanded, throwing up his hands in the despair of an artist confronted with impossibility. "And especially that night, that terrible time of *la Nuit Noire.*"

Like the rest, Vallator shivered. Even after two years it was still very present to them all, that terrible Black Night of France when the whole nation hung on the ends of the telegraph wires in an agony of apprehension.

"For weeks we had been nerving ourselves for that which was to come upon us. Something of a terror that would eclipse all that had gone before. And that night, when those guns began, we knew it had come. A nightmare—that is all I can say."

As Amato paused Vallator pressed his hands to his eyes in an attempt to shut out the pictures conjured by the old man's words. The glare of the star bombs lighting what might have been a world of dissolution. Gray waves of the enemy struggling forward through blue mud, wiped out by the guns as relentlessly as one might wipe out insects. Men looming out of the darkness all about, mere walking shapes of clay, going from whence to whither there was no telling.

Amato was continuing:

"And always, always those guns from across the river, sounding as if Belial himself were playing the Black Mass on an organ of cannon pipes. One could almost see him, my friends; the Blond Beast himself, in his glittering helmet and his eyes aflame with mad arrogance.

"We had crept out to see, the girl and I, sheltering ourselves in a *poste de secours* of the Red Cross. We thought it was our finish. Nothing could live in that blighting rain of steel. And then, suddenly—a silence."

As he paused that long-gone silence seemed to creep into the room, stilling even the breath of the listeners as they waited for what was to come. Vallator could feel it grip him; one of those inexplicable silences of a battle. Only a few seconds as a rule, but how interminably they could hang as one waited and braced oneself against the added roar to come. So vivid was that picture in his ears that he dug his nails into the flesh of his palms.

"And then——"

Amato paused again in dramatic effect.

"And then, from out of that silence—the Voice."

"*A-h—la voix.*"

It was a sigh more than a sound, a general murmur fused into one as fingers signed the cross on brow and breast.

"Yes, a voice; *the* voice, singing above us as it seemed, from somewhere above those star bombs raining on us their cold blight, with fear creeping as a snake about our hearts. Prisoners told us it was heard even across the river, and that the shock of it halted their advance and stayed the hands of their gunners.

"A miracle, yes, as it swelled out in a volume of golden sound. The voice of a man, it seemed, but what man would sing in such a place? A voice singing in a veritable ecstasy of triumph, a golden wine of the soul for fainting hearts.

"How long it sang none can agree. Some say half a minute, some half an hour. Time had nothing to do with it, standing aside and relaxing its grip. All about us you could feel men's hearts reviving. Then the voice swept up into great shouts. Shouts of victory, my friends, shouts of a triumph barbaric, unconquerable. They were taken up all round us, men shouting in an answer that spread all up and down our lines. Minutes after, even above the guns unleashed again, you could hear that response coming from farther and farther away. Even though they had not heard the Voice itself they had heard our reply and they thought it was some signal victory we were acclaiming, and they shouted back, turning again on the enemy with a vigor redoubled.

"Verdun never fell that night, nor afterward. But it was perhaps never so near it as when that Voice sang to us from above. It saved our France that night."

There was a gust of relief, the explosive breath of relaxed tension. From across the table Régine leaned toward Vallator, her hands on his with a little shake to recall him.

"BUT *mon ami*, what have you then? You look so strange, so white."

"Don't be frightened," he answered, struggling back from his intense absorption. "It is only that I was imagining something; Verdun perhaps. That is the first time I have heard that story told."

"But where have you been not to hear it? All France tells it. You can hear it in every village and the people nod and believe and are comforted.

"I can't tell you now," he replied, with a gesture of exasperated helplessness. "A little while ago I could have—but now——"

"And why not now?" she persisted, but another voice, cutting across the silence of the room, saved him the necessity of answer.

"An excellent fairy-tale, Monsieur Amato. And most excellently told."

It was that forgotten figure by the door who spoke. As he listened Vallator found himself envying the crispness of those tones, their authority, their undercurrent of cool amusement. Had he, upon entering, but been able to produce such sounds his troubles would have been over; people did not question such a voice as that.

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The man's appearance matched it as he emerged from the shadows. A young fellow, elegantly languid, dressed in the last most fashionable device. His presence was almost a shock, for the days when such figures of leisured elegance had been common in France were now so swept away. His profile, dark, thin, slightly aquiline, struck Vallator with a sense of familiarity.

As the surprise of the man's entry subsided there came a growl of general dissent from his words. Exhausted by his story, the old actor had sunk into an apathy, but a grizzled *poilu* took up the cudgels on his behalf.

"A fairy-tale, *hein*. Does monsieur then imply that it is a lie?"

"By no means," the stranger answered, in a cool impertinence. "The story is one of the great legends of the war now. I make no doubt at all that they heard—something. In point of fact, I heard it myself."

"And what was it that monsieur heard?" asked the *poilu*.

"Probably some man singing."

"A man!" The other spat in derision at the fire. "And will monsieur inform me what man would sing in such a place as that?"

"From what I have seen men will do anything at any time. Have you never heard them sing during an attack?"

The shot struck home, drawing nods of reluctant assent from the soldiers scattered here and there.

"Of course, even so it was remarkable," the young man went on, in a half-contemptuous concession. "But it would be fatal to place too much reliance on such things. Iron, steel, blood and death—it is upon those that we must depend rather than on the rumors of miracles."

With that musical magnetism in them his tones should have warmed and heartened, but instead the atmosphere seemed to chill under them, that simple faith of these simple people beaten down even as green wheat under the hard glitter of hail. All that remained was those words "steel-blood-death" and they hung in the air, almost to be tasted, bringing with them the bitter tang of those fields of the north outspread in their crimson carnival.

Only Régine held her ground against the stranger. "And has monsieur then seen this wondrous man who could sing on such a night?" she demanded, in fiery sarcasm.

"CERTAINLY I have. He is now shut up, for his own safety."

With a laugh of recovered faith the *poilu* spoke again.

"I understand the mistake of monsieur. I too have seen this man, a dozen of him, at least. Poor fellows, crazed by shell-shock, wandering until the lunatic asylums gather them in, proclaiming themselves to be this or that. There are fashions in madness, monsieur; at the beginning of the war they imagined themselves *Le Petit Caporal*, but now they all proclaim themselves to be *La Voix de Verdun*."

"In multiplication is proof," laughed the young man.

He turned to the landlady, whose sense of duty had at last overcome her awe of his air of authority.

"*Billets d'identité?* Certainly I have them but I do not care to show them just now. It is for me to demand and for you to answer. I am here to meet some one—a Red Cross messenger from Madame la Duchesse d'Abrantez."

At the words Vallator felt as though a trap had been sprung beneath him, letting him down into Heaven only knew what fresh mess of trouble. Beaming at this added justification of his presence, the landlady indicated him.

"A messenger? Of a truth he is here, awaiting monsieur."

There was no possible escape, barely time for a lightning glance between himself and Régine, to which she could only reply by a pout of helplessness. The stranger's gaze was already upon him and under it Vallator rose boldly.

"Here I am," he said, with as much unconcern as he could assume.

"Then we will talk outside," the other answered, leading the way.

III

THE rain had ceased and a watery moon struggled through the clouds. Beneath its glimmer the plain showed more lonely than ever, the poplar trees shaking afresh in a keen wind that stole down from the north.

Near them a motor car was drawn up, the moisture steaming from its hood, its blue-lensed headlights showing that it came from darkened Paris; probably the same motor that had cut off Vallator's retreat from the inn half an hour before. In contrast to the Old World setting of those walls and gables, unchanged in a hundred years, that long, gray rat of a car might have been some steam-breathing creature from another æon, born of that steel and fire which the stranger had invoked.

With a skilful turn Vallator placed his back to the lights, letting them shine full upon the other. More than ever came that feeling of a forgotten familiarity, yet such a figure should have been easily remembered. With that face like a dark, male flower; those long, white, pointed hands, and the chemically greened rosebud at his buttonhole, he had the morbid perfection of a Beardsley drawing, the same subtle suggestion of a strangeness at once concealed and insolently revealed.

That was partly owing to his eyes, Vallator decided. Whether by a trick of nature, or the reflection of those lamps, they shone from his dark face with a cold, blue light.

"Well, what word did the Duchess send?" he demanded in an English as perfect as his French. Probably his Italian, Spanish and Russian would have come with the same accentless purity.

Vallator's mind was an abyss of question. He must answer quickly and in a way to avert all suspicion of his own genuineness as a messenger. But what possible word could a Duchess d'Abrantez be sending to this bizarre stranger at the Inn of the Three Maries? To his relief the other answered his own question with a shrug of sheer amusement.

"It is hardly necessary to tell me. That you are here at all is sufficient proof that she has reconsidered. Otherwise—well, it would have been just like a woman to bring me a hundred miles out of my way to receive my answer by the simple means of receiving none at all."

He seemed in high good humor, very conscious of his own perfection as he stood there, tapping a cigaret on a jeweled case. Then came the snap and sparkle of his electric lighter and from the front seat of the car a shadowy figure shot out like an uncoiled spring.

"It is all right, Ruach," smiled the man, waving him back with a languid hand. "A faithful creature," he nodded to Vallator. "A Madinga from the Sahara—quite dumb, too. I had him made so in Tangier, where I picked him up."

Vallator flamed in resentment but the very coolness of the confession seemed almost to remove it to some sphere beyond the reach of every-day standards, a sphere in which this man himself appeared to move with his physical perfections, his insolences and his mysteries.

"It hurts to have the tongue taken out," he went on. "Then, when he was in the midst of his pain I came and soothed it for him. Consequently I am now a god to him. He probably thought that Madame d'Abrantez had decided to relieve her difficulty by having you murder me."

"He evidently does not know her if he supposed that," said Vallator hotly and the other smiled in cynical agreement.

"Like myself, Ruach can not understand you people, sodden as you are in your slimy sea of mercy. Mercy—" He spat the word out as he might some unclean thing. "The very slough of failure, which is the only sin. Well—what word did she send?"

"First, to whom do I speak?" asked Vallator, parrying for time in which possibly to gain some inkling of what that word might be. "How am I to know that you are the right person?"

"AS TO that, what proof have I but that you yourself may be an imposter?" demanded the other in a brilliant amusement, and Vallator felt again that trap of a possible detection springing beneath his feet.

"Surely my uniform is sufficient proof."

"And my mere presence is usually enough," the other retorted with an insolence almost startling. "Is it possible you do not know me?"

"I am an American," said Vallator.

"That of course explains much, though it hardly excuses it," was the contemptuous reply. "You came over with the Ambulance Corps?"

"I am with them," Vallator replied, feeling no necessity to speak of his two years in Paris before the war.

The other's gaze rested keenly on him and he felt again that half uncanny sense of a familiarity.

"You come from over the sea, where I have never been, and yet we have met before—and that meeting was an important one—for both."

Like a dark mantle which fell about him the other's mood changed. Though looking full at Vallator he seemed to be speaking to himself and a slight disorder of restlessness crept into his gestures.

"There has been something between us, otherwise you would not be here to give me the word upon which hang issues so enormous. These things are not by chance. Ah—these meetings—perhaps ten thousand years ago upon some other star.

(*Continued on page 78*)

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Lil' Ol' Red Stockings

By Gerald Beaumont

Past the paddock and on to the stand,
Whip and heel and spur and hand;
Buckle to buckle and knee to knee—
Bridle to bridle—"Shake her free!
Up on the shoulders—lift her on!
The little mare's got him—on, go on!"
—Rhymes of a Railbird.

Mr. Beaumont's first contribution to EVERYBODY'S is this story of a little thoroughbred mare that was nursed and coaxed and coddled by a faithful trainer in the hope that she would one day revive the glory of a famous racing stable. It is a story that contains both moving sentiment and dramatic suspense. There is a thrilling race in it, and a faithful picture of a world of sport which the author knows thoroughly as the result of his contact with it as an athlete, referee, official scorer and sporting editor.

"FOURTEEN hundred!"

"Fifteen!"

"'Fifteen hundred,' says the gentleman; fifteen hundred for the little daughter of Lord Valor out of True Blue—a bit dicky in the legs, but no better blood in America. Fifteen, do I hear sixteen? Speak up, boys—she beat Jack Tar a head on the post carrying one hundred and twenty-one pounds! Make it sixteen hundred and you lead her away. Fifteen once. . . . Fifteen twice. . . ."

Old Sandy McKee passed a trembling hand across his mouth. His eyes arrested the attention of the man on the box; fingers fumbled in a vest pocket and produced a heavy gold timepiece. He held it up.

"Fifteen and the watch," he quavered. "It's worth two hundred—a double split second repeater, listen!" He pressed a hidden spring. From his upraised hand, a tiny gong sounded the half hour by quarters, and then in deeper cadence the hour itself.

The auctioneer smiled indulgently. "Fifteen hundred and the watch for Lady Courageous."

"Seventeen hundred," said a voice.

Sandy McKee lowered his hand. His shrunken figure relapsed into drab nonentity; his faded blue eyes studied the tan turf at his feet.

There was a sudden movement on the inner fringe of the circle. A man in his early thirties, attired a bit too jauntily for the average horseman, stepped forward and held up two fingers to the auctioneer. The latter nodded.

"Two thousand dollars from the owner of Lady Courageous. Mr. Pennington retains his mare. That ends the sale, boys." He scrambled off the stand, and the crowd melted, leaving Tod Pennington frowning upon Sandy McKee.

"YOU'RE an old fool, Sandy," commented Pennington, "an obstinate old fool. Not alone must you come clear across the continent to fight with the best trainer in Kentucky, but you would beggar yourself for a stall-warmer."

Sandy McKee winced. "Not that," he protested, "she'll start again."

"Piffle! Here, boy!" Pennington hailed a passing groom. "Bring out Lady Courageous."

But McKee interfered hastily. "You can't show me anything I don't know. I've slept in her stall every night for two weeks. She has bowed tendons on the two front legs, her feet are contracted and she has a bad frog."

"And the devil's own temper," added Pennington. "Now, why do you want her?"

"Come with me," said Sandy. They walked along the row of whitewashed stalls until they came to a little bay mare arching her neck over the half-door of her compartment.

"Easy," warned Pennington, and kept a respectful distance, but McKee walked quietly to the stall door and stood there with arms at his sides.

For a moment the mare withdrew her head with the ears twitching, but as McKee made no move, the velvet nose protruded timidly, and as a blind girl might pass deft fingers lightly over her lover's face the delicate tactile hairs and sensitory nerves located in the soft pad at the end of the muzzle felt of Sandy McKee's hands, and up along one arm to his neck and features. Still he made no move. The shapely head lowered to his shoulder and nudged impatiently.

"Memory," explained McKee. He slid one hand along the mare's neck and rubbed the space between the ears and then down over the eyes, pressing his fingers firmly over the skin and always in one direction. "She remembers how her mother licked her on the head and neck when she was a foal; it's better than patting, isn't it, old girl? Now, listen!"

He lowered his head over cupped hands. As if from far off came the faint strains of the bugle-call to the post.

Lady Courageous jerked her head in the air, small ears quivering. Her bandaged legs trembled. In the luminous eyes the high lights danced as she stared with distended nostrils in the direction of the track.

"Imagination," whispered Sandy McKee. "She sees herself facing the webbing right now. Easy, you lil' ol' red stockings—I shouldn't have teased you."

He came slowly back to Pennington.

"Why does a man want his own child?" he asked simply. "When Lady Courageous was foaled, Colonel Pennington says to me: 'Sandy, I'll let you name her and I want you to watch over her like she was your own flesh and blood. The grandest little filly in the world, Sandy—all of Lord Valor's courage and stamina, and all of her mother's speed and gentleness. Some day, Sandy, she'll win the Pennington Handicap just as her sire did.' So I named her Lady Courageous and used to lay awake nights worrying about her. And then," Sandy McKee's wan eyes wandered over the empty grandstand in the distance—"then—the Colonel died, and you left me at the farm, and hired Jake Mantor, who rushed her out as a two-year-old, and——"

He did not finish.

The shapely head lowered to his shoulder and nudged impatiently.

UNDER the mask of cynical indifference that contrasted oddly with Tod Pennington's nut-brown eyes and boyish features, the warm blood coursed to the surface.

"I thought it was something like that when you held up the watch," he commented. "My father's, wasn't it?"

McKee nodded. "He gave it to me when Valor hung up the mile and a quarter mark at Latonia."

"And the little mare—what were you going to do with her?"

Sandy McKee turned wide eyes on his former employer. "Why, take her back to California and build her up again."

"And then?"

Sandy shrugged. "I don't know," he muttered, but the light in his pale eyes betrayed him.

"Damn me!" exclaimed Pennington, "damn me, if I don't think you'd bring her back in the old colors and start her in the Pennington Handicap!"

Sandy McKee's lip twitched an affirmative. Somehow, standing there in his faded clothes, sublime in the singleness of his faith and purpose, he seemed to typify not so much the romance and vicissitudes of the race-track as the unfaltering and faithful spirit of the thoroughbred.

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Tod Pennington tore a leaf from a pocket memorandum-book and penciled a brief inscription. He handed the paper to Sandy McKee.

It was a bill of sale acknowledging for value received the transfer of Lady Courageous. With something strangely suggestive of old Colonel Pennington's charm of manner, he hushed the other's stammering.

"*My* thanks to *you*, Sandy. Take the little mare west and be good to her. The old cerise and green forever, eh, Sandy! Gad, I didn't think there was that much sentiment left in the world. You Scotch are a wonderful people. God's luck to you!"

That night, Sandy McKee and all that was left of the famous Pennington string departed in a box-car for California. Not until long afterward did McKee learn that the sale he had attended that day had been for no other purpose than to pay off the family debts, and that he had left Tod Pennington lacking just two thousand dollars of having a cent to his illustrious name.

The little town of Pleasanton drowses in the sunlight forty-one miles east of San Francisco. It is a pearl strung on a slender stream that winds over the level floor of the Livermore Valley. Low hills encircle it, tawny yellow in summer, emerald green in winter. From an eminence to the southwest the Hacienda del Pozo de Verona looks down upon a race-track.

Hither in the winter months from Canada on the north and the Atlantic seaboard on the east come shrewd trainers and gallant horses seeking the seclusion of the quiet hills and the soft Arcadian air. And into this setting one late October afternoon plodded a little old man leading a broken-down bay mare. Half-way along the shaded lane that stretches from the Southern Pacific station to the long lines of cool stalls the man paused to look back solicitously.

The mare shifted her weight from one bandaged foreleg to the other and with upraised head stared at her surroundings.

"We're almost there," encouraged the man, "just a little ways more. Didn't know where old Sandy was taking you, did you? See anything familiar about those barns right ahead?"

Lady Courageous whinnied and limped forward.

"UH-HUH," corroborated McKee, "same old home; going right back to the very stall where you was born, too! Ain't changed a bit, Lady—not one bit. Still got your mammy's and your daddy's pictures on the wall, and it's cool and dark and quiet. That ain't all, either, Lady; tomorrow old Doc Kelly looks you over and we start to patch them legs."

Chuckling contentedly he led the way along familiar paths past the office of Barney Gilligan, superintendent of the track, and along the last avenue of low white stables. He stopped triumphantly before the open half-door of a box stall at the extreme end.

"Pretty far from the winner's circle at Latonia," he admitted, "pretty dog-gone far. Handicapper's slipped us top weight sure enough. Go on in, Lady—here's where we show those wise birds in Kentucky what a cripple can do."

The mare entered obediently, and he busied himself removing her hood and traveling wraps and scurrying around after water and feed.

Old Doc Kelly was bald and fat. He came waddling up the following day for the promised inspection.

Through half-closed eyes he studied the little mare as she limped from her stall, appraising the exquisitely molded head and long neck, the clear-cut throat, the sharp withers, and the deep chest that afforded unusual room for heart and lungs.

"H'm," he acknowledged, "she's got the Lord Valor strain all right, his big heart and her mother's small bones. That's the trouble; she'd carry a house and drop in her tracks before she'd quit."

His fingers probed the injured tendons and the swollen ankles. One after another he raised the hoofs and studied them. Finally he straightened up and spat reflectively.

"BREED her," he advised, "she's through!"

Sandy McKee's lower jaw dropped and then set stubbornly with a click.

"I say she runs again!"

"All right," rumbled the other, "on the day she does I lay you a thousand to one," and he waddled indignantly away.

Not by the slightest expression of his face or voice did Sandy McKee betray to Lady Courageous the fear that was in his heart. He knew too much about horses for that.

"Old Doc Kelly's got a funny way about him," he confided to the mare that night, "but he means all right. Next week he'll be hanging over the door just waiting for a chance to help out; you see if he don't! Darned if you're not beginning to perk up already. That liniment's doing the work, old girl—you're looking better every minute."

The next day he set about cutting down the contracted hoofs and rectifying the horny pad in the sole of the right forefoot. "No more shoes for a while, old girl," he chirruped; "going to let you stand barefoot till you spread them hoofs. Just going to make you a mud-pack for that bad frog—funniest little old boot you ever saw—just you wait and see!"

Lady Courageous nickered and bent warm nostrils to his coat pocket. He produced the customary lump of sugar and stroked her neck and flanks with long firm pressure of his wrinkled hands.

In the evening he returned bearing a leather arrangement half full of soft blue mud. The mare bent an inquisitive muzzle over the strange object, and then wrinkled her nose and upper lip.

"Now, now," he scolded, "I'm not going to ask you to eat it. Here, give me the foot!" The hoof yielded to his touch and over it he fitted the improvised boot.

"There," he grunted, "that's the best little old mud in the country—right out of the well of Verona. Mind you don't knock it loose!"

That night, Lady Courageous leaned one shoulder against the side of the stall and eased herself to the straw bed, holding her right foreleg gingerly from the floor. McKee grinned appreciatively.

For several days he concentrated on the task of reducing the swelling over the tendons, applying cool dry bandages the last thing at night and wet cloths for the day treatment.

He looked up one day to find the light from the doorway blocked by the figure of old Doc Kelly.

"Why don't you use the firing-iron?" demanded the veterinarian. "Cross-fire both legs and then blister them. Bring her down to my place."

"Go on away," bristled McKee; "get out of my light."

The rotund figure of the man in the doorway swelled to the proportions of a young balloon tugging at its fastenings.

"A thousand to one, you old fool!" he yelled, "a thousand says you haven't even got a selling-plater. I'd operate on your head if it wasn't made o' iron!" He caromed away, snorting the vengeance of heaven on all Scotchmen.

Nevertheless, old Doc Kelly's suggestion bore fruit, for it coincided exactly with an impression that had been gathering strength in McKee's own mind.

"Lady," he whispered to the mare, "I'm afraid we're going to have to do something cruel to you, but it ain't half so cruel after all as keeping you from the barrier when you've been raised for nothing else. Understand, old girl? We're going to have to hurt you; going to burn the skin so that it folds right close to the bone and holds those tendons in place. Then we'll put on your lil' ol' red stockings and by and by—you'll begin running nice and easy, and then faster and faster—and first thing you know, we'll go back to Latonia."

Lady Courageous moved restlessly.

Early in the morning he led her to the veterinarian's quarters. "Here she is," he capitulated, "but if you make a botch of the job, I'll kill you."

Doc Kelly made no botch. His father and his father's father had been students of horseflesh. For all of them it was both a gift and a passion. Hours afterward, when it was all over and Sandy McKee was quivering like a girl who has seen her mother's ghost, the stout man turned a perspiring face on his lifelong friend.

"I'M STILL laying a thousand to one," he reminded, "but I hope I lose it. She's the gamest little mare that ever drew breath."

"Don't I know it!" flamed McKee.

The winter passed and a California spring painted golden poppies on the emerald hills. Sandy McKee clung stubbornly to a program of bandages, iodin, warm fomentations and a daily parade along the whitewashed stalls—a parade that almost imperceptibly extended toward the mile track that stretched alluringly at the end of the avenues.

And Lady Courageous, hearing never a harsh nor loud word, and conscious only of tender ministrations and a growing strength in the bandaged legs, responded in the only way she knew—with intelligent obedience to her trainer's every suggestion and with implicit faith that all was well.

Then one June evening after a day of gentle exercise on the track itself, followed by Doc Kelly's careful examination of the dry, clean scars, Sandy McKee lifted his voice in an ancient melody of the British barracks. It was characteristic of him that at moments of greatest happiness he should select the most lugubrious of themes.

"Wrap me up in my old stable jacket,
And with footsteps all mournful and slow,
Convey me at night to the graveyard,
And bury this duffer below."

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The bookmakers held out against the onslaught a minute longer and then declined all further bets on the McKee entry.

There were innumerable verses, each one a little more melancholy than the others, and he sang them all; while Lady Courageous flexed small ears forward and back, aware from his tone that her master was unusually content.

From then on the work-outs became more strenuous, and the little mare, nothing loath, fought for her head as McKee, standing up on the rail, hat in one hand and watch in the other, waved to the boy on her back to hold her in.

Never once did Sandy McKee neglect to praise her extravagantly after every effort. In the evenings, by the light of a coal-oil lamp, he studied the racing forms.

August came. Lady Courageous was then five years old, silken coated, trim of limb and in her prime, with a year's rest behind her—a year spent in an equine paradise.

ONCE again her owner sought out old Doc Kelly and laid a heavy gold watch on the latter's dusty desk.

"The fall meeting at Latonia opens in a couple of weeks," he said. "Me and lil' ol' red stockings need a couple of hundred. Can you spare it?"

The veterinarian picked up the watch and examined it carefully. Then he laid it down, his eyes twinkling.

"Am I a pawnbroker?" he demanded. "Not a cent do I lend you or any other man, but," he added, reaching for a checkbook, "I pay my bets—promptly!"

McKee took the check and noted that it was for one thousand and one dollars.

"Not a word, you old fool," threatened Doc Kelly, "not one word—only wire me when she starts; there is a little more where that came from and it is a wise man who knows when to hedge."

The trainer walked out the door and back to Lady Courageous. He made a trumpet of his hands and sounded softly the call to post. The mare quivered to attention.

"Traveling clothes, Lady," he exulted, "going back to old Latonia—going to start this very night!"

The fall meeting had been on for two weeks when McKee from Latonia sent a telegram to the New York office of Tod Pennington. It read:

> Mile in forty-four on soft track. Come at once. SANDY.

Pennington showed up three days later.

"Not Lady Courageous? You don't mean——"

McKee beamed. "Who else? To-morrow morning at five o'clock I'll let her step for you."

In the cool, sharp air of the early morning Pennington met McKee at the stable entrance to the track just as Lady Courageous appeared with a stable-boy on her back. The track had dried out.

"Half way around in a two-minute jog," instructed the trainer, "then let her down to forty-eight."

The boy nodded and cantered away while the two men moved to the rail, watch in hand. Intently they studied a drab blur moving swiftly around to the half-mile post where the mare's stride suddenly lengthened. McKee's thumb pressed the stem of his watch.

A little later when the mare flashed past them her rider's elbows were crooked back and his hands drawn well toward the body. McKee glanced at his timepiece and closed the lid with a satisfied click.

"Under double wraps," he observed quietly, "and a hundred and twenty-five pound boy."

Pennington's eyes glittered. "Sandy, it's a miracle! Two or three races and she'll be in form."

McKee frowned. "She's ready now, and she runs but one race."

"The Pennington Handicap?"

The trainer nodded. "I've entered her already."

Tod Pennington smiled sadly. "Sandy, you're overplaying your hand. There are three horses here that can beat the mare at her best and they'll all start."

"Yes," McKee agreed, "they'll start and a lot of others, but it will be a two-horse race."

"One horse," corrected Pennington, "St. Ivan—the greatest stretch runner in America; a mile in 2:02⅕ seconds. Who can beat him?"

Sandy McKee's pale eyes warmed to fanatical fervor. "My lil' ol' red stockings," he exclaimed fiercely, "that's who'll beat him! That's who'll win the Pennington Handicap. They've never beaten the Pennington colors in that race, and they never will. The Handicap's ours!"

"She'll be twenty to one," mused Pennington.

"BETTER than that," McKee told him, "she's down for one hundred and twenty-one pounds, the old weight, and she'll run in bandages. Lord Valor's heart and True Blue's speed; forty to one, and a two-horse race!"

"Gad!" breathed Pennington, "I never thought I'd be back at the old game. Ten thousand to the winner, and forty to one! By gad!"

"The old place is for sale," McKee interjected. "It wouldn't take much to fit it up as a stock farm. There's Lady Courageous——"

"You old fox," laughed Tod Pennington, "you'd like to see me keep up the family tradition, wouldn't you? Darned if you

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haven't got me going, too! Saturday? By gad, you're on! The old wheel of fortune, eh, Sandy? Well, we'll give it one more spin!"

The Friday evening sporting extras and the overnight entry sheets were singularly alike in their tips on the Pennington Handicap. St. Ivan was the unanimous selection, despite his top weight of one hundred and twenty-eight pounds. Friar John was given the second choice, and the Harbridge entry third. Concerning Lady Courageous, the comment was also uniform:

"Been working fast, but first time out in a year. Legs doubtful."

But late that night a watchman patrolling the darkened stables stopped to listen to a voice that sounded a melancholy chant from a distant stall:

"Wrap me up in my old stable jacket;
Put a slab at my head and my toe,
And get you a penknife and scratch there:
'Here lies a poor duffer below.' "

Far into the night the dirge continued.

The morning ushered in gray clouds scudding over a track that was lightning fast. Tod Pennington showed up early in the afternoon with four trusted agents. He sought out Sandy McKee.

"I'm heeled, Sandy; you and I are fifty-fifty if the little mare comes home in front."

The trainer shook his head. "The purse is enough for me; that and the Lady. You'll need everything you can make to get the farm back and rebuild the stable."

"Fifty-fifty," insisted Tod Pennington; "we're partners no matter what happens!"

THE first slates on the mile and a quarter Pennington Handicap with a field of eight starters gave prices on St. Ivan at even money, with Lady Courageous chalked up at twenty-five to one, but almost immediately the former was cut down to four to five and then one to two under the pressure of public choice. When the odds on the McKee entry had lengthened to forty to one, Tod Pennington and his quartet of commissioners, at a given signal, hit the betting ring from five points of vantage.

The mare's former owner was recognized at the third book by "Big Jake" Schaefer. In answer to the latter's "H'lo, Tod, how you playin' 'em?" he held up a roll of bills:

"Hundred on the Lady to win."

"Four thousand to a hundred, Lady Courageous," droned "Big Jake."

The man at his elbow rubbed the slate clear and the bookmaker leveled his glasses at the other price-lists. One after another of the pencilers were sponging off the odds on Lady Courageous. Schaefer lowered his glasses and called to Pennington:

"Who's this Sandy McKee?"

"My father's old trainer," Tod replied.

The bookmaker's eyes narrowed. Over at his left, one book was still offering forty to one. He beckoned a messenger and thrust out a handful of currency. "Place and show on Lady Courageous," he whispered, "over at Connelly's—quick!"

The messenger and Pennington clawed their way through the crowd, followed by a train of those who are always on the alert for "wise" money. Billy Connelly saw them coming and guessed their purpose. He shook his head and wheeled around to the board. Opposite the name of Sandy McKee's mare appeared the figures "15-6-3."

Pennington held up a hundred-dollar bill. "Lady Courageous on the nose."

"Fifteen hundred to a hundred," grunted the bookmaker and rubbed his slate again. Pennington turned. "Big Jake's" messenger was fighting his way across the ring to where the New Orleans book was stubbornly holding out odds of thirty to one. In the swirling mass of humanity struggling at the base of the New Orleans platform, Pennington recognized two of his agents.

The book held out against the onslaught a minute longer and then declined all further bets on the McKee entry. Meanwhile, hundreds of men had had time to ask one another what it was all about; to look up Lady Courageous's last performance; to note that she was running under the old Pennington colors, and to recall the turf tradition regarding a Pennington entry in the Pennington Handicap. The rumor spread like fire over dead grass that the mare was primed for a killing, and in three minutes the rush toward Lady Courageous became a stampede. St. Ivan receded to even money.

Tod Pennington made his last bet at six to one and then hurried to the paddock. He was in time to hear Sandy McKee give his last instructions to little Travers, a sixteen-year-old boy, whom the trainer had picked out after one glance at the intelligent gray eyes and another at the long, slender fingers.

"Remember," McKee said, "no whip nor spurs; when the time comes, talk to her. Keep as close to St. Ivan as you can without getting pocketed; he's all you have to beat."

The boy nodded and McKee gave him a leg up. Lady Courageous was trembling in every dainty limb, her eyes twin pools of liquid flame. She reared up, pawing with bandaged forelegs, and McKee clung to the bridle.

"Easy, you lil' ol' red stockings," he soothed. "I know what you're waiting for; Sandy knows—there!"

"All right!" cried some one.

McKee released his hold and swept a final caress over the mare's saturated coat. One after another the starters in the Pennington handicap filed out of the paddock.

A bugle sounded.

"Come on," Pennington urged. "I've got a good place saved for us on the rail."

THE field of thoroughbreds paraded past the grandstand and then turned back toward the barrier, St. Ivan, number one horse, leading the way.

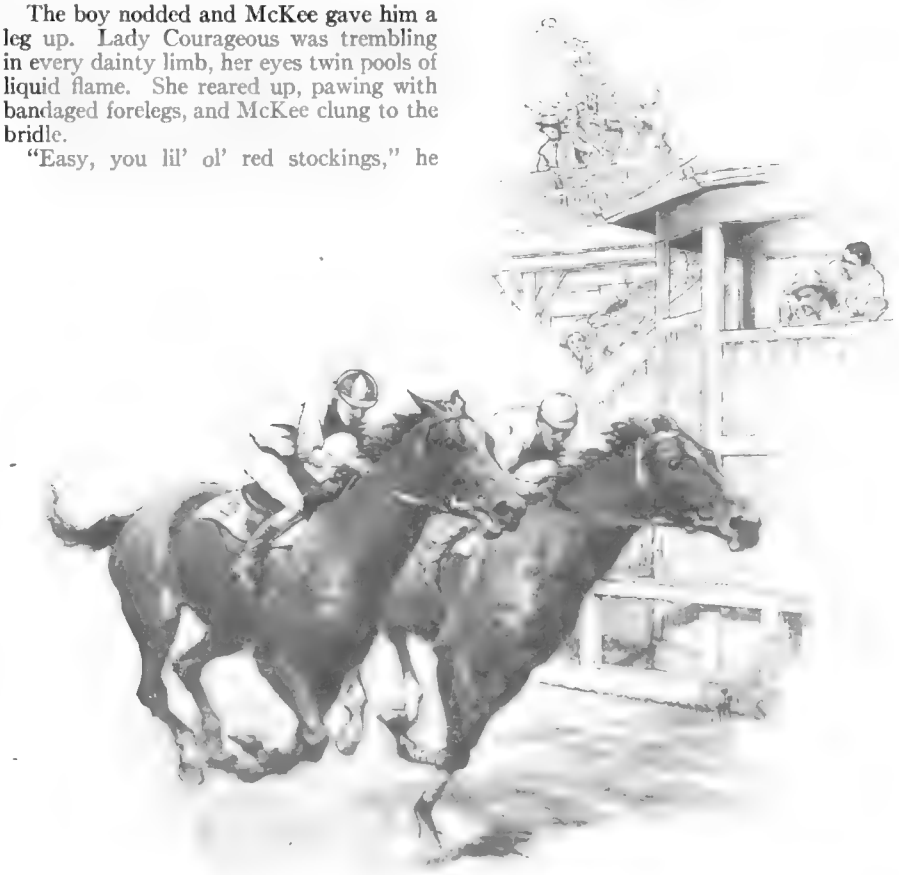
One glance at the majestic son of Petersboro, looking every inch his class, and another at Lady Courageous, now strangely docile, cantering past on bandaged legs, and the crowd surged back into the ring.

Once more the cry of "St. Ivan to win!" echoed through the enclosure. Odds of one to four were being written when the shout: "They're off!" coupled with the shrill clamor of an electric gong, sent the human tide sweeping again toward rail and grandstand.

Tod Pennington's heart sank within him, but Sandy McKee, standing erect and with a flush on each withered cheek, smiled as the field thundered past the grandstand.

Southern Belle, the Harbridge entry, carrying one hundred and twelve pounds, had the early foot, followed closely by Captain Adams and Starlight. The others were bunched, with St. Ivan lying in fifth place and Lady Courageous still holding to her position on the outside.

At the first turn the field shifted kaleidoscopically, stringing out into a moving



Running at his shoulder and on the outside, where she had been from the first quarter, a little bay mare was measuring St. Ivan stride for stride.

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blur of color. McKee's eyes failed him.

"The Lady," he questioned, "where is she?"

Pennington stared through puckered eyes. "I can't make her out. Sixth, I think—no, that's Starlight, almost the same colors—St. Ivan is seventh. Ah, there he goes!"

A jubilant roar sounded from the packed stands. The race was nearing the half-mile post and St. Ivan was moving up on the outside. As easily as a child gathering up its toys, the great black horse picked up his field. One after another he passed until he took command with two lengths of daylight between him and the tiring Southern Belle. In his admiration for the gallant leader, Pennington almost forgot his own interest in the race and the little old man standing at his shoulder.

He was recalled to his surroundings by McKee's hoarse voice: "The Lady, where is she?"

Again Pennington shook his head. His eyes could not make out the familiar cerise and green. He turned to a man at his side who was watching the race through field-glasses.

"Can you make out Lady Courageous?"

"No," the man replied. "I plunged on her, too." He looked hastily at his program and again at the blur of color now nearing the far turn.

"By God!" he exclaimed, "there are only seven horses out there and there were eight starters. She must have broken down!"

A STRANGLED cry came from Sandy McKee. Three pairs of eyes swept the track that lay back of the runners. It was empty.

The man with the glasses leveled them again. Then he took off his hat, flung it down and jumped on it.

His wild yell was swallowed in a roar of wonder that swelled from the blackened grandstand. For the mighty son of Petersboro, swinging around into the home-stretch, disclosed for the first time that he was not alone. Running at his shoulder and on the outside where she had been from the first quarter a little bay mare was measuring St. Ivan stride for stride!

They made the turn, the boy on St. Ivan hugging the fence, his left boot held clear of the top rail. The mare swung a trifle wide and then closed again resolutely.

Leaning out over the railing, Sandy McKee's straining eyes caught sight of that for which he had been waiting: far down the track a pair of red bandages swinging in the sunlight.

"THERE she comes!" he whooped. "There's my lil' ol' red stockings; there she comes!"

The mare's quick recovery of the lost ground told its story to the boy on the black horse. From under the peak of his cap he shot one panicky glance at Lady Courageous, and then went to the bat. That instant of quick fear, communicating itself to the sensitive son of Petersboro, put the most cruel of all handicaps on a gallant horse. He responded desperately as his rider's whip rose and fell in the sunlight.

"Now," breathed Sandy McKee, "talk to her!"

As if in answer to the trainer's prayer, lost in the vocal vortex, little Travers swung forward on the shoulders of Lady Courageous. His hands moved out on the reins to within a few inches of the bit. With face bowed to the mare's neck, his small arms gave with the bob of her head.

Down they came, St. Ivan on the rail; Lady Courageous at his right! A shrill hysterical scream from a woman leaning over the grandstand banister rose above the deeper clamor:

"*Pennington! The Pennington finish!*"

The cry awoke memories of turf tradition. The throbbing roar of "St. Ivan!" was blasted by the exultant yells of the long-shot fraternity: "Lord Valor!" "True Blue!" "Pennington!"

For the bay mare, true to her colors and her ancestry, disdaining the rail and asking only for room—plenty of room—was coming down the center of the track just as her sire and her mother had done in the days of their glory.

Half-way down the stretch St. Ivan, aware that the greatest test of his career had come, gave to his rider all that was in him, but Lady Courageous was racing for Sandy McKee! By heart-breaking inches she nosed ahead at the paddock, and at the wire it was Lady Courageous by a neck and going away!

Petrified by the miracle of it all, Tod Pennington clung to the railing, eyes mechanically set on an iron framework across the track into which white numbers were slowly dropping. First a "2," then a "0," then another "2." He waited breathless, but there were no more numbers. A great cry rose from the stands.

"S-SANDY!" stuttered Pennington. "Sandy, a track record! A cripple and a track record!"

But Sandy McKee was no longer at his side. A shaft of sunlight, piercing the clouds, glorified a little old man crouching in the winner's circle in front of the judges' stand; crouching there with anxious eyes fastened upon a bay mare cantering back to him on bandaged legs that still moved clean and strong.

Little Travers held up his hand; caught the judges' smiling nod, and slid from his mount. The stands rocked, and the band played. Gray-haired men clapped Sandy McKee on the back and shouted his praises. But he saw only a little bay mare nudging forward to be petted; he heard only the shrill whimper of feminine ecstasy that was blown through the blood-red nostrils of Lady Courageous.

Derelicts

By Charles P. Hauser

YOU, who so smugly claim the judgment-seat
Against these hulks who sailed the Seven Seas,
Whose narrow lives knew not one wild pulse-beat,
What would you give to hold their memories?

The turquoise sky, the yellow tropic moon,
The jolly sailor chanteys, faintly heard,
A dusky fin that cleaves the still lagoon,
The ghostly circles of some dark-plumed bird,

Rare gems and satins in some thronged bazaar,
Strange Eastern idols, carved in cunning jade,
A line of laden camels from afar,
And merchants, come to chaffer and to trade.

Their footloose feet well knew the lonely trail,
The hills would beckon, or the sea might plead,
And some there are who follow still the Grail,
And there are some who never more will heed.

They diced with Time, and counted not the cost,
While Romance won the golden stake of years,
And you, who say, with lip of scorn, they lost,
You envy them, the while you voice your jeers.

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Beatrice, in a whisper, made the comment to Christopher: "How irresistibly handsome the boy is!"

The Boy

By Frank Swinnerton

Mr. Swinnerton, who has a long list of novels to his credit, is probably best known to American readers through his "Nocturne" and the more recently popular "September." The fine artistry that distinguishes his work is apparent in "The Boy." Fancy, a delicate feeling for mood and atmosphere, and a sympathetic understanding of character are interwoven with surpassing skill in a short story that has unusual freshness and charm.

LENGLEIGH was one of those large old houses in which one can lose oneself on the way to the bathroom, the very ancient home of the Trents, and now occupied by Christopher Trent and his young wife, Margot. The house had a third occupant in Christopher's brother Adrian, but nobody took very much notice of Adrian, because he was a mere boy, and was left to himself, to play the flute and read poetry and waste his days in dreaming.

Nobody took much notice, either, of Margot. It was not that Margot was ugly or ungraceful or insignificant; but that she was modest and deeply in love with her husband, so that he had become used to her devotion and did not prize it.

Christopher had all the physical vigor in the family. He was a great big burly young man, very handsome, with a small mustache and cleanly cut mouth and good teeth, fond of all outdoor exercise and at times thoroughly and obtusely manly. He could estimate the qualities of a mare, had played cricket for his county, football for the Harlequins, could shoot, row, and fish. He had been "a good match for any girl"; and in marrying him Margot had been envied by half the young women of Christopher's acquaintance.

Unfortunately she had fallen in love with her husband with the real love of the good and the unselfish. She did not cling—she had too much native pride to do that or to show grief at his tolerance of her; but she had not the arts of the temptress, and relied solely upon her love to keep her husband's heart—her love and her loving kindness to him. She was eager to be happy. She loved him so much that he never had any uneasiness about her. Christopher was beginning to assume that she belonged to him by right; and so she was losing value in his eyes and to Christopher was in danger of seeming insipid. And all this Adrian, the boy, was learning by the intuition which grew day by day among the tangle of his dreams. Adrian, too, had not failed to observe the visitors who thronged to the house during these beautiful summer months, and he had

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formed his own opinion of them, also, as he had done of his brother's wife.

Adrain had seen the Sheppersons and the Leys, and Rolf Vernon and Sara Blanche, and Horace Twicker and Muriel James, and the Hynes and the Normans; and about each one of these he had woven a tissue of thoughts, very secretly and surely, until all of them were known to him. He never put his knowledge into clear terms; it was always something far away, deep down in his consciousness. He was almost dumb, so little inclination had this boy for speech; but his understanding was the understanding of imagination, and he knew much more than he could ever have told.

Above all, he knew Margot. He knew her better than she knew herself. And when he wanted to discover the truth about a new visitor he always watched the way in which the visitor behaved to Margot. That taught him a great deal, so that she was his touchstone. And of all those who had been to the house, Adrian most hated and feared Beatrice Lagrange. He hated her so much that sometimes he could not bear to look at her, and this aversion of the eyes amused Beatrice so much—and perhaps wounded her—that, as she was one of those bold, very dark, energetic girls who take pleasure in discomfiting others, she always teased him about it in public, and pretended to believe that he was in love with her.

The boy would look at Beatrice from a distance. He was physically aware of her whenever she approached him, and at times would shudder, so greatly he disliked her. She was in his eyes cruel, sensual and unscrupulous, with a kind of smoldering heat in her that was less like fire than the atmosphere of a hothouse.

Adrian knew well why he feared Beatrice. It was because she despised Margot and was teaching Christopher to despise her. It was because she called Margot "a little Puritan" (quite clearly meaning "milksop"), and because Adrian could see that the physical sense of her which was unpleasant to himself was shared, with attraction, by his brother. Beatrice, then, was a danger to this household, and the boy saw it long before any other person could have done.

Adrian was always apart from the others. He took his breakfast when he pleased, and was absent when he pleased; so that often a whole day would pass for him without contact with anybody else who happened to be staying at Lengleigh. He was rarely far distant, but he was never at call. His shy nature took him to remote corners of the rambling house and grounds, and sometimes the only hint Margot had of his nearness was the sound of his flute as he played idly by the little river or in a copse.

SHE was the only one to know his haunts, and there was a quaint comradeship between them; but it never took the form of anything so dangerous as confidences, for the boy was shy and Margot was proud and neither spoke with ease of their feelings or their deeper thoughts. So they knew each other by instinct, and neither ever guessed what the other was thinking.

Adrian hid from men and women, and read and played and dreamed by himself, only half-human, but wholly humane and tender. Margot did not hide. She lived with a strange reality of her own, all love and kindness, but with a power to suffer great agonies of secret grief which shook her the more vehemently because they remained hidden behind her quick light smile. If she had enjoyed her husband's unquestioning love, her happiness might have been well-nigh unbearable. As it was, she knew as surely as Adrian where danger lay, and was as powerless as he to avert it.

All round the old house lay the beautiful grounds of Lengleigh, full of bowers and glades, for they had been planned in older days, when surprise was the ambition of the designer. One never knew, at Lengleigh, where the sward would give place to wood, and where flowers and fruit might come suddenly together, rivaling each other in beauty and wealth of hue. There were vistas for the eye, and rich scents and mysteries for every taste. Tree-covered hills lay in the distance; and near the house there were a thousand unexpected beauties.

IT WAS an ideal place for friends and strangers, for there was never any end to the possibilities of enchantment for those who strolled at ease among the varying greens and browns of the land. In this summer weather, in mid-July, with the moon waxing ever larger toward the full, the evenings and nights were even more exquisite than the days; and by almost general consent the after-dinner recreation of all was to walk in the cool gardens, gathering their delights in one incessant evocation of beauty and peace.

But all the same there was a curious restlessness in this large company, for all except Margot belonged to the world which seeks only to amuse itself, and all were craving for new sensation, new excitement. They roamed indeed; but they all presently came back to the house for bridge, unless they had found in some new flirtation a momentary distracting pleasure.

Thus it happened one evening that the boy Adrian, alone in his wandering, came upon Margot in the depths of a silent little wood which they both knew; and Margot, for once broken in spirit, was crying quietly in the shadow. Adrian too well knew the cause. He had seen Christopher, already notorious before his marriage for the misapplied ardor of his passing loves, flirting openly with Beatrice Lagrange—so openly that even the guests had remarked the outrageousness of the whole affair; and Adrian was not at a loss to explain Margot's present grief.

He would have withdrawn; but Margot had heard his approach, and stood there wiping her eyes and for the first time appealing for his sympathy. For the first time, therefore, Adrian put his arm about his brother's wife, and gave her a little reassuring hug of affection. He could feel the trembling of her body and the relaxation which, produced by her bitter weeping and the sudden appearance of her only friend, showed how much she had suffered and how weak she had become in her distress.

"Poor, poor Margot!" Adrian cried. "How sorry I am for you!"

Margot put her arms round his neck. She was still sobbing, but very quietly. Her pride was gone for this instant.

"Adrian, dear," she whispered, "my heart's breaking. He doesn't love me any more. I don't think he ever can have loved me."

There was a silence in the dusk. They stood alone, the two who saw the same evil.

"He must love you!" Adrian protested at last, because he could not believe her. "Who could help loving you?"

Margot shook her head slowly. She had so many other proofs to sadden her.

"No. He doesn't love me. I'm not pretty or attractive. I'm——"

"But Margot! You're so lovely!" Adrian was astounded at her speech.

"No. I'm small and fair and pale. And I love him. I've always loved him so much—too much. But that's not enough for two. If one loves, and the other doesn't, then it means the most dreadful unhappiness for the one who loves. Adrian! I'm so unhappy that I don't know what to do. Oh, what shall I do! It seems so cruel, so horribly cruel!"

"It's outrageous!" cried Adrian, thinking of another matter.

"Oh, that—" Margot's drawn face was saddened afresh by a little bitter smile. "That's only one thing, you know, Adrian. But it's making me desperate."

They had spoken clearly for the first time. Margot was slowly drawing herself from his arms. She was even trying to conquer her distress, because his own was so evident. While Adrian remained deep in thought, she patted his arm. It did no good, she knew, for both to be wretched. And nothing could be done by her friend, who was a mere boy, of whom nobody took any notice because he was good only for reading poetry and dreaming and playing upon his melancholy flute.

"Good night, Adrian, my dear," Margot whispered, and was gone.

Adrian, left alone in the little wood, came to a sudden decision. As he stood there, he remembered that little figure, her head bowed and her tears falling, so made for love and happiness. And he remembered seeing his brother laughing and flirting so expertly with Beatrice. The decision Adrian took was unspoken. But it was a resolve that this situation should immediately be cleared. The problem, he realized, was simply one of means; but the means were as yet beyond his calculation.

II

IT WAS the next morning, and Adrian was early abroad. The sun had risen and was catching the dew and making the lawns glisten. The flowers were pouring their exquisite scent upon the breeze, raising their heads to the sun. The birds, for the ground about Lengleigh was so wooded that the birds nesting and singing there were numerous, were making the air throb, such was the volume of sound that came rapturously from their full throats.

Adrian walked like a king amid the beauty. His head was among the clouds, and his heart quite soft to all this loveliness. He had forgotten his own griefs, which were imaginary; he had forgotten also the real griefs of Margot and the cruelty of Christopher, and the wickedness of Beatrice, who cared only for the indulgence of her pleasure, no matter what the cost to others. All these things he had forgotten because the morning held so much delight for him.

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Then, very faint and clear, they heard the first notes of a flute. It seemed far away, a mysterious and haunting sound.

As he walked, his slight figure grew taller; his long hair was lighted by the sun; his step grew slower and slower, more and more the dragging step of one in a dream. And again he came unexpectedly upon Margot, who, unconscious of an observer, stood silently beside the stream. A smile was upon her gentle face. Her head was lowered. She held a half-blown rose, and was seriously gazing into its mysterious heart. All the sadness of the previous evening was gone from her, for she too was sensitively listening to the morning rapture. Adrian smiled in sympathy.

He moved to join her. Then, stricken with a sudden impulse, he stepped away, so that while he could still see Margot she could not easily see his eyes among the undergrowth. From his pocket he drew his flute, and upon it began to play very quietly a melody which he knew she loved. At first, so engrossed was Margot, she did not hear him. Adrian continued to play.

It was strange to see her suddenly become aware of the music, to see the new poise that came into her body, and the almost startled raising of her head. For a moment she looked around and sought him. The smile came again to her lips. With beautiful grace she took two or three steps, turning hither and thither, bending her body. One arm, slightly extended, brought the rose once more to her notice. One foot was pointed. In that exquisite ease with which she swung round Adrian found fresh inspiration.

HE PLAYED on, and Margot danced to his playing, half in the shadow, and half in the sunlight, turning, swaying, bending, most perfectly in unison with the lovely air. Adrian withdrew the flute from his lips, and Margot stopped, her happy dream dispelled. And yet in that instant of perception, Adrian had seen his way clear. He was no longer in doubt.

"Margot!" he called, and played again, stepping from his shelter. Margot, at first still, moved toward him the elasticity of the dance still in her motion.

III

THAT night, at dinner, everybody was surprised to see Adrian appear, debonair and correctly dressed for the evening. They all stared at him and exchanged glances. For one thing, he no longer looked a boy, a stripling; but was one of themselves. For another, his handsomeness and fine carriage could not be questioned. Even Christopher's eye was caught. He gave one quick look, and then was impelled by a curious feeling of mingled admiration and perhaps of jealousy to prolong his contemplation into scrutiny.

The boy, it appeared, had grown up. He was a man. He was even a rival for

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Christopher. Not the last of those present to observe the change was Beatrice Lagrange. Hers was the comment, made in a whisper, to Christopher: "How irresistibly handsome the boy is!" Well, Christopher could hardly enjoy that, you would think! Only Margot saw no change, but glanced proudly at Adrian with gladness at his coming. Beatrice, in the same low tone, drew Christopher's attention. "Ah, Christopher," said she, "you should take notice of your little wife's expression. Little Puritan indeed! But who could blame her?"

Christopher started slightly. He craned seriously to observe his wife as she spoke to Adrian, her eyes raised with such loving confidence, her lips parted, showing her pretty teeth. Christopher turned back to Beatrice, whose own eyes were for himself. He read no trust there, but a mocking defiance; and upon her lips no sweetness, but a possible torture of passion. What a contrast with Margot!

Instinctively he turned back to his wife, to make the comparison afresh. Again his eyes traveled from face to face. They stayed fixed upon Adrian, so tall, so graceful, his long hair brushed back from his face, his expression strangely alert, and his hands, as he described something he had seen, eloquently in motion. It was a strange sight for Christopher, himself a handsome and vigorous man of a wholly different type; and Adrian presently noticed that his brother was pointedly regarding him.

As they looked thus, almost challengingly, at one another, the company was driven to a direct sense of the difference between the brothers. In all that was involved in muscular strength and in assurance, Christopher had the decided advantage. But in all that spoke of the spirit of man, Adrian shone like a star, for he was still pure, and Christopher had been tarnished by so much self-indulgence.

There was a stilling of the talk for perhaps twenty seconds; and then everybody forgot the singular pause. Only Margot and Beatrice, apart from the brothers, had been aware of it as actors in the scene. Beatrice breathed deeply. Margot lowered her eyes. They all four lost themselves in the chatter that preceded the announcement that dinner was served.

ON THIS night Adrian sat upon Margot's left hand, so little formal were the Lengleigh dinners. Christopher was at the other end of the table. There was a great swaying of talk, for with such a party there was no lack of topics, and everything, from personalities to teasing, from gossip to serious or half-serious discussion, might be heard on all sides. Whatever else they might be, these diners were not bored.

They laughed affectedly, perhaps, or underlined a word so that it might carry a second meaning; but they were all apparently enjoying themselves. It was their rôle in life—to enjoy themselves. They had no other occupation. To enjoy themselves, to talk, to play, to flirt, to cultivate faithlessness as a greater spur to perilous enjoyment, was their law of life.

Upon every hand, to Adrian's critical eye, they were doing it. For once his criticism crystallized into a deliberate hostility. "What futility!" he thought. "What *is* the good of all this waste chatter and folly?" There was no answer. He drank some Moselle. It was beautifully cool. It pleased him. He drank again. His glass was refilled. In a few moments a strange new vivacity stole into his being. He was stimulated and sharpened by the wine, so that instead of revolting against the guests he had a kind of laughing, tolerant contempt for them.

HE SAW their faces, and the bare shoulders of the women, in a glow. They became, not hideous and malign, but ridiculous. He wanted to laugh at everything. He was conscious of being filled and bursting with preposterous thoughts which he longed to utter in the most laughing and absurd speeches. Only Margot, so quiet and pale, was unchanged in his eyes. The rest had ceased to have any importance. They were curious little creatures, antic and grotesque. He did not hate them. He was swollen with gigantic laughter at them; and they, seeing his mischievous smile, were drawn to a contemplation of Adrian, and a new interest in him arose in their simple minds. They saw what they had never expected to see—a devil lurking in his eyes.

So, below his dreaminess, which was all they had hitherto seen, the boy had that unseizable "something" which will always be a fascinating mystery for the stupid ones, that spirit of mischief, that rebellious and indefinable mockery, which catches the fancy and often the love of men and women against the possessor's will and against the will of those who are its victims. Adrian became a magnet for these people. They admired him suddenly to an incalculable degree. And he magnificently ignored them all, swift in his loyalty to Margot, who was like a flower among weeds.

There was a whisper, of which Margot alone was conscious; and her cheeks flushed faintly. She thought—she knew not what she thought. She dreaded to meet Adrian's eyes, she dreaded to meet any of those inquisitive, hard, amused eyes which, staring, sought hers. Adrian's excitement had caught Margot, and she was struggling desperately against it.

It seemed to her that misery could go no farther, that she had become reckless; and all the time she was trying to be cool, trying to be composed, and blushing still at the sophistication which she knew to be all around her. Margot was overwhelmed with the conflict between timidity and excitement. At one moment she would laugh with all her heart, and in the next she would feel so constrained that she resembled a schoolgirl. It was thoughtlessly cruel of Adrian to be so buoyant that he left Margot in such a state of contending emotions; but the moment was his, and he could not resist it. He was carried away by his own gaiety. He turned upon the guests and ridiculed them by name, ridiculed his brother, ridiculed Beatrice, ridiculed himself. It was an astonishing scene.

"You're all mad," he cried, his face radiant with mockery and good temper. "All mad, and timid, and conventional. You think to be bold; and you're only bored. With the whole earth offering you real excitement, you cling to the hearth and the board and the bed. You are all tame animals, and don't know a forest or a tiger or a passion when you see one. Now I am the true hunter, the true wild creature; and I came here to dinner in a strait waistcoat to-night a stranger among you all. Only I know the beauties of the true life. Only I know what happens here at night, in the moon and among the flowers, when you are all asleep and dreaming of bacon and eggs and other men's sweethearts. It's hidden from you. You'd love to know it all; but you're timid unbelievers. You'll never know the wonders of the earth and the night. You can't know them, because you're not ready to see them. Blind! Blind!"

He spoke with such an air of raillery that they could not be offended, but laughed at him and raised shouts of protest as he denied them so entirely the power to amuse themselves with realities. Beatrice bent forward to look at him.

"My little boy's drunk!" she called, and made everybody laugh again.

"How strange you should say that!" Adrian retorted. "When I'm so far from *you*. Come, Christopher, am I drunk?"

"Precious like it!" Christopher answered, in a solemn, nonsensical way. He was suddenly enjoying the scene, proud of Adrian, interested for the first time that evening.

"Am I drunk, Margot?" demanded Adrian. Margot, flushed and afraid, had the spirit to support him loyally.

"No!" she cried, her eyes sparkling. "Only inspired!"

"I'm wise. I'm wise. I tell you, I can conjure spirits for your delight. I can make the earth reveal some of its secrets. I can command the spirits of the night. But not for the timid. Only for those who can accept what happens as if they had believed it might come at any minute. Not for the silly people who are always surprised. You shall see."

"By all means evoke these spirits!" said Christopher. "If you can. Let's have a rag!"

"Splendid!" they all cried. "A rag! a rag!"

Everybody moved their heads and hands, in a sort of eagerness. The men visioned great activity and shouting and beating the bushes and promiscuous kissing; the women all saw themselves dressing up and scampering in the moonlight. Christopher thought: "We'll start these fools on their revels, and Beatrice and I will be alone together." Nobody knew what Margot thought—not even Margot. But the boy held up his hand.

"Not a rag," he said. "Something better. I'm master of the ceremonies. You shall have something better than a revel. I promise you. Something real. D'you agree?"

"Yes. Yes. Yes," came from all around him. Only Christopher in a spasm of fear glowered upon Adrian, in case his plan should be upset by this singular boy, who had captivated all Christopher's guests, who had made Margot behave like an absolute milk-and-water fool, who had bewitched Beatrice into inattentiveness and a curious intent gaze upon so beautiful a youth. Adrian—the boy—the magician! What a problem for a puzzled Christopher!

IV

BY THE end of dinner they had half-forgotten the promised revel. Their memories were short, the wine they had drunk was potent, the room had grown

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warm with the fumes of wine and cigars and cigarets. The daylight was still clear without, although indoors they had pretended otherwise. Long fingers of it stretched through the drawn curtains and made the artificial lights turn yellow.

"What about your revel?" one of the guests asked Adrian.

"By moonlight only!" he responded, still banteringly confident. "Wait! In good time you shall see!"

But in truth his tone was not in keeping with his true feeling, for Christopher and Beatrice had vanished, and as the dusk began first to gray the distances he had seen them together; while Margot had slipped away under his eyes before he could recall her. If she were lost, then Adrian's plan, so vaguely formed, was spoiled, and his chance would pass. What wonder he left the guests to their own pleasure, and walked alone in the shadows, studying the sky for the moon's rising? It was the moon which was to light the world afresh for Margot!

As the day died, so the wind fell, and the trees grew still. Adrian heard their faint hushing as he walked, and listened to it with a kind of rapture. It was as though a whisper of his approach was set afoot among the leaves, and passed from tree to tree, until the message was carried far beyond the garden and out into the open country. And to and fro the secrets of the evening seemed to be wafted, the mysterious voice of the dallying breeze carrying a secret exquisite sense of unfathomable darkness and love from the distance right into Adrian's heart.

He listened to the music with a startling sense of expectation. He would have been surprised at nothing. Not for him, now, was nature ungovernable and cruel; it was fragrant with promise. He felt it harnessed to his wishes, carrying them to fulfilment. Evening came, and long shadows; and the moon rose white and devouring, so that all color fled, and only this piercing light drenched the face of the earth. He was content. His ears strained for every murmur, Adrian slowly sought the house again. His lips were now firmly set. Still there remained upon them that mischievous smile, not of triumph, not of malice, but of his newfound humorous tolerance of folly.

V

AS HE came near the house, Adrian began to look about him in the shadows for some trace of Margot. Indoors he could hear a piano being played. At one time he caught the first flicker of a glowing cigar. His way led him past the conservatories; and from one of them he heard a laugh, richly and unmistakably the laugh of Beatrice. It was mingled with another laugh. In both sounded the same brimming note of danger. These two were perilously near the wildness that makes a scoff of others, that brings conventions crashing, the wildness that is a defiance to true love.

Adrian paused, holding his breath. A double feeling assailed him—anger and—what was it? Was it not that he, too, felt the attraction of this daring woman? Perhaps Adrian was not immune from danger. He had been conscious of aversion, but never of indifference. He listened again to that mingled laugh, and, as he did so, heard a step upon the path, heard the step cease, and looked up to find Margot near him, her hands pressed together against her bosom. She was pale in the moonlight, a ghost in that silent scene.

Adrian moved toward her, took the little hands in his.

"Margot," he said, in an urgent tone, "listen, dear. I have a plan. It may be nothing, it may do nothing; but it is a chance. I want you to do as I tell you—for just this once."

"What is it?" Margot asked in a voice that seemed to hold no feeling at all—a voice so listless and without hope that it was almost inaudible.

He whispered.

"No!" cried Margot fiercely. "Never. I'll——"

"Yes, Margot."

"I couldn't."

"Yes, Margot."

"I shouldn't be able to do it."

"Margot!"

She looked at him very quickly, with the caressing admiration of a mother. Adrian felt the pressure of her fingers, a hesitation. He waited.

"How firm you are!" she protested. "How tyrannical!"

"For your sake, Margot. It's a possibility."

"Dear Adrian," she said.

"Do!" he urged.

There was another little pause. He could see Margot's head bent. Then a mischievous little smile stole to her lips, curling the mouth into a strange and irresistible bow. Her head bent further. For an instant it was against his breast, and the clasp of her fingers became as strong as his own. In the moonlight Adrian saw her eyes flash, and her head, withdrawn, suddenly erect. If Margot had been surprised at Adrian's strength of will, he, in turn, was astounded at the life and devil which he saw at last revealed in her. Margot's spirit was awake. It was eager and vehement.

"I will!" she suddenly whispered. "I *will!*"

"At eleven. Be in the copse at eleven. Dressed—" He too was excited beyond anything he had ever known. They were both excited and laughing. From the conservatory, clinching their compact, came once more that brimming, dangerous peal, which reminded them that Christopher and Beatrice were together, sharing a delight in which others had no share.

VI

ADRIAN left Margot to go to her room. He continued his way to the drawing-room. Here, and upon the terrace, he found most of the party. Standing so that all could see, he cried aloud:

"Ducdame! Ducdame! Ducdame! Listen, friends. I promised that you should presently know the secret of the night."

"Hurray!" they cried, and gathered in a circle about him.

"You must know," Adrian proceeded, "that here, on this lawn before the terrace, and on the nights about the full moon, ancient spirits of this house foregather. The lawn, this that you see, is haunted by a pixy and an elf, uncommon sprites of a wondrous fascination. And at this time of the year, at a certain hour, they appear, and for a time dance out the secrets of Lengleigh. What do you say? Shall we watch for them to-night?"

"Hurray!" they cried again, all laughing.

"Come then. For the present, do nothing. But at eleven o'clock gather here, very silent, hidden in the shadow of the house. And watch. I promise you shall not be disappointed. Is it agreed?"

"Agreed!" they shouted. "Eleven o'clock."

"Splendid. But mind, in silence. And watch the shrubbery, because it is probably there that the elves live."

As he went, they fell into a laughing hum, piqued at the fancy, half-scoffing, half-intrigued, wondering what joke, what rag, was promising. As the evening was half-spent, and as their pleasure in it was waning, they were all ripe for some new interest. They watched him depart with curiosity. Adrian retraced his steps. Outside the conservatory from which that excited laughter had sounded earlier, he repeated his proclamation. It was received in silence. Had the laughers gone? No, for he heard a murmur of voices. Again he proclaimed the hour. There was a rustling, a protest. Then Beatrice appeared in the doorway.

"All right, little boy," she said.

"Beatrice!" called Christopher, from within.

She stepped out into the moon-bathed garden, breathing in its deep scents.

"How hot it is in there. How lovely here!" she exclaimed.

"Beatrice!" called Christopher again.

Adrian could see her eyes dancing. She came closer to him, and took his arm. In a low voice she said:

"How handsome you are, little boy!"

She was so close to him that Adrian could feel the softness of her breast against his arm. His eyes met hers, so full of arch temptation that he smiled back into them, and Beatrice caught her breath sharply.

VII

ELEVEN o'clock came. The guests all assembled upon the terrace, and Beatrice and Christopher were among them. They were all in the shadow, and were so close to the drawing-room, which had been darkened, that they heard the silver chime of the clock as it struck the air. Over everything was a deep silence, so that the guests, from their whispering jokes and irrepressible laughter, were at last silent also in their expectancy. The moon shone, bleaching the lawn. Behind the silver grass all the trees and bushes shed black shadows, so dense that the scene was thrown almost into the sharp relief of black and white. A real stillness was apparent. The beauty of the night had cast a spell upon the watchers.

All their eyes were fixed upon the bushes from which they had been told the sprites might appear. The seconds ran. No motion stirred the trees, no shadow trembled upon the grass. There was nothing. Only the merciless silver and the thin rim of blackness under the bushes. A deep breath was drawn. So eager were the guests now that they did not notice each other, but sought only the awaited figures.

Then, very faint and clear, they heard the first notes of a flute. It seemed far away, a mysterious and haunting sound.

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It came nearer, nearer yet. In the bushes they watched there was no movement. And yet—

"There! There!" A finger was pointed to the farthest corner of the lawn, where two dazzlingly white figures, slim and graceful and beautiful, for the first time showed. In the hands of one was a flute. The other carried only a fine scarf. Together the two advanced, dancing, dancing, beautifully tender and restrained, every movement in harmony with the lovely air which the flute revealed. The dancers were masked. They turned and bowed to each other, and advanced slowly, still in rhythm, to the center of the lawn; and the hush deepened. Only the sound of the flute could be heard. The dance began. It began and it continued, sometimes fierce, sometimes languishing, always so full of grace and meaning that the beholders were transported.

Everything, the beauty of the night, the clear, unflinching moon, the common hush, and the exquisite motion of elf and pixy, combined to rob the onlookers of any troublous thought of ordinary things. They were all alike absorbed in the dance. They had never seen anything so exquisitely beautiful as the smaller fay, or anything that more surely stirred their emotions. At first the pixy begged for love, shy and tender; and the elf, piping upon his flute, denied the gift. Then both were sad, languidly turning and expressing the sorrow that lay upon them. Elf grew defiant, and danced gaily, to show that his heart was free. Pixy was distraught, grief-stricken, dying. Her head was bent; her slender hands stretched to the distance.

Then she, too, found surcease from the pain of love, and grew cold. This seeing, elf was full of chagrin. He piped to her. He eagerly showed his wish to please. He pursued, in spite of her disdain. Again and again he pleaded with pixy, who turned and danced away into the shadow, eluding him, mocking still, and unconquerable. So the dance ended in fruitless pursuit, for pixy would not be caught, and elf would not abandon the chase. The figures disappeared into the darkness, and the piping grew fainter and fainter, until at last it ceased, and there was again silence over all the garden.

VIII

IT WAS unbroken for an instant, and then, with their strained attention relaxed, the guests turned to one another. They were all enthusiastic. All had been moved and delighted. And all had observed, the men with surprise and admiration, the women with rather less surprise but with dislike, how beautiful the smaller of the dancers had been. She it was who had entranced them, and all were wild with praise. All except Beatrice, who said to Christopher in a smothered voice of uncontrollable candor:

"How beautiful the boy is! How beautiful!"

There was no answer. Christopher was no longer at her side. She saw him entering the shadow some yards away. With perhaps a start of astonishment at his desertion, Beatrice stood for a moment in thought. Then, with a shrug and a sigh, she followed Christopher. She understood.

Together they trod silently through the filtered moonlight, Christopher unconscious of her nearness. He was pushed onward by imperious impulse, careless of everything but the object of his quest. All else was forgotten. For this time it was as though it had never been. He was on fire. At last, coming to the copse, and in the moonlight beside it, Christopher found Margot. She lay, half-fainting, in Adrian's arms, and Adrian's cheek rested caressingly against her soft hair. She still wore the exquisite white dress in which she had danced. She was a fairy still, more pricelessly beautiful and adorable than she had ever been.

At the sight of Margot and Adrian embraced, Beatrice could not restrain her laugh—a sharp laugh of surprise. It stung Christopher. He looked round once, passionately, and then strode to the others, a towering figure of masculine strength in comparison with their slim grace.

"Come, Margot," Beatrice heard him say. He took Margot's arm, took both her arms, and surrounded her with his own, tearing her thus from his brother.

"Adrian!" cried Margot, in a voice of desperate emotion, almost of fear.

Savagely Christopher struck Adrian, so that the boy staggered and overbalanced. He fell silently upon the moon-whitened ground, while Margot struggled to help him. But Christopher held her close and Beatrice came quietly forward. So were they all thus transfixed in the moonlight, until the boy, raising himself slightly, began to play upon his flute the haunting air to which they had danced.

"Come, Margot!" commanded Christopher once again.

Margot, unable to resist his strong arms, went with him; but her last glance was for Adrian. She stared back, and so exerted her strength that Christopher was compelled to stay an instant. Together they looked upon the boy, who continued his playing. Beside him, kneeling upon the grass, was Beatrice. Both were smiling.

Margot made as if to return.

"Adrian!" she cried again. Then some uncontrollable emotion made her cling to Christopher. He kissed her very gently, a kiss almost of awed love, as though he were awaking from an evil dream and finding his sweet true love in the awakening. Then, glancing back once more at Adrian and Beatrice, he laughed. An instant later they were lost to sight.

They had never seen anything more exquisitely beautiful, or anything that more surely stirred their emotions.

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The Dark Secret

By Lucian Cary

How do they do it?—keep a maid, run a car, dress in latest fashion—all on a known and limited income. The Gannetts' neighbors, like neighbors the world over, asked each other the question, and Lucian Cary, in this delightfully novel "mystery" story, gives us the answer.

THIS is a mystery story—the mystery of Professor Gannett and the five hundred dollars. It explains more than that. It really answers the question that has been asked so many times about the Gannetts. The question is: "How do they do it?" It refers, of course, to the way the Gannetts live.

Many people would see nothing queer in the way the Gannetts live. But faculty people know precisely what an assistant professor's salary comes to, and what it will buy and all. The faculty wives agree that Mrs. Gannett is too well dressed. Mrs. Bender, whose husband is a lawyer and who lives next door to the Gannetts, told Mrs. Stewart, whose husband is assistant professor of agronomy in the college of agriculture, that she knew for a fact that Dorothy Gannett made all her own clothes.

"They don't look it," Mrs. Stewart said.

"I have seen her making them," Mrs. Bender said firmly.

Mrs. Bender likes the Gannetts, and always defends them. People take it for granted that Mrs. Bender could illuminate the problem if she would. Mrs. Bender can not. Mrs. Bender doesn't know any more about it than anybody else. And her line of argument has gradually come to be that the Gannetts haven't any more money than other assistant professors have, that the Gannetts simulate prosperity by the most skilful management. But she does not wholly succeed in convincing herself.

She knows that Dorothy Gannett has a half-time maid, a middle-aged woman who comes in at eight o'clock every morning except Sunday and does the dishes and makes the beds and gets luncheon, a woman who charges thirty cents an hour, and even Mrs. Bender admits that this person's wages must come to nearly eight dollars a week.

"Besides," Mrs. Stewart continued, "do you know what one of the Gannett twins told my little girl just before they went away for the summer?"

"Which one?" Mrs. Bender asked.

"I DON'T know which one," Mrs. Stewart said. "I never can tell those boys apart. But I heard him say to Alicia: 'My father is going to buy a second-hand car this summer. An' not any flivver either.' That's what he said."

"Children do talk," Mrs. Bender countered.

"Yes," Mrs. Stewart admitted, "and sometimes they say things."

Mrs. Bender sighed. "Dorothy Gannett is very clever," she said.

"I don't believe she's so clever. And any way I'm tired of hearing it." Mrs. Stewart spoke with the acidity of one to whom Dorothy Gannett had been held up as a model once too often.

"I think," she continued, "that there's some simple explanation. I think somebody died and left them money. You can't deny that they didn't use to seem so prosperous. It can't be that she's such a clever manager. If it was *that*, why they'd have lived the way they do now all the time. But I remember a year ago this commencement, when Dorothy Gannett came to the president's reception in the very same dress she'd worn to every president's reception she ever went to. And this year!"

Mrs. Stewart raised her eyebrows and shook her head by way of describing the dress Dorothy had worn.

"It's come since a year ago this last commencement. I can remember."

II

MRS. STEWART'S faith in her memory is entirely justified. Dorothy Gannett did wear the same dress to six annual president's receptions, a dress of pale-green *crêpe de Chine* that was part of her trousseau. But the seventh year she appeared in a daringly simple frock of midnight-blue velvet trimmed with silver, a dress that she had made herself, but nevertheless a dress that amply justified Mrs. Stewart's suspicion that she hadn't, a dress that was distinctly handsomer than any other dress there.

For six years Dorothy Gannett did all her housekeeping with her own hands, except for a woman, who came in one day a week to do the washing and scrub the kitchen floor, and not always that. This last year Dorothy has paid quite eight dollars a week for the part-time maid who does them out, as they say in Chelsea. And there have been other extravagances that nobody knows about. Nobody except the Gannetts knows, for instance, that Trumbull Gannett has recently subscribed to three expensive technical journals.

Obviously Mrs. Stewart's suspicions are not without reason. Clever as Dorothy Gannett is, she is not clever enough to achieve all this on the salary of an assistant professor in the state university of Monroe.

Not with the price of twins what it is today.

Which brings us to the five hundred dollars.

The idea of the five hundred dollars began to occupy Trumbull Gannett's mind on a Saturday afternoon in June, the very Saturday of the president's reception at which Dorothy Gannett wore the *crêpe de Chine* dress for the sixth time.

The Gannetts lived in a small old-fashioned one-story house. When the twins came, the spare bedroom that Trumbull Gannett had used for a study became a nursery. He made the loft his own with bookshelves, a kitchen chair, a pine table, and an oil student's lamp. The place was too warm in mid-summer, being directly under the roof, and too cold in midwinter, being heated only by a drum on the pipe of the base-burner. But a professor who has twins must have some place of refuge in which to prepare his lectures, and mark his quiz papers, and read up on his subject.

It is popularly supposed that twins are less trouble than single children. The error is probably due to the fact that so few people have actual experience with twins. Twins are often as much trouble as half a dozen children and they are always at least as expensive as two and they invariably make more noise and cause more destruction than any three children separated by age. Twins really ought not to happen in a professor's family unless his wife has money of her own, and statistics show that they seldom do.

But the twins did happen to the Gannetts. They happened while Trumbull Gannett was still an instructor. They were a year old when he was advanced to an assistant professorship. They are four years old now. And they will be nine years old at least before he is a full professor. These details of academic rank may seem trivial. But they are not. In the state university at Monroe the difference between an assistant professor and a full professor is fully fifteen hundred dollars a year.

TRUMBULL GANNETT is not a professor of Greek, with a white beard and an authoritative knowledge of the enclitic *de*. He is in the engineering school, hardly thirty years old, and his specialty is gasoline-engine practise. It is a useful specialty, judging by the number of students who wish nowadays to study the subject. But it would be wrong to suppose that Trumbull Gannett is any less a professor for professing a subject that is popularly supposed to be useful. He isn't. He is just as loyal to the Idea of a University as anybody in the classical department of the school of liberal arts, and just as disinterestedly devoted to Truth as any man in the astronomical observatory.

The popularity of his courses means that he has more papers to correct, that's all. Thus, on this Saturday afternoon in June when the plot began to take shape in Trumbull Gannett's mind, professors of Latin and professors of comparative literature and professors of medieval history were playing tennis on the faculty courts while Trumbull Gannett sat at his work-table in the loft between two piles of blue books, the final examination papers of his class

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in "Gas I." To his right were the few books he had yet to read, to his left were the many he had read; in front of him was a sheet containing the names, in alphabetical order, of the students in the course.

He took one of the books at his right, opened it with the same motion, read it in two minutes and fifty-five seconds, placed it on the pile to his left, poised his pencil for three seconds, jotted down an A, or a B, or a C, or a D opposite the right name on the list, and reached for another book—all with a regularity of impulse that has been achieved only recently in gasoline engines, a regularity that is possible to a man only when the task he performs is sufficiently dull.

Trumbull Gannett's mind was as little occupied by the process as if he had been shelling peas; he could have marked his students just as well if he had dropped their examination papers in the waste-basket without reading them; but as long as the University required final examinations he would read the examination papers. He was a conscientious man, Gannett. But his conscience could not prevent a stream of alien perceptions from flowing through his mind.

He was conscious of sounds in the kitchen below—the scrape of a chair, quick steps, the momentary rush of water at the tap above the sink, voices—sounds that meant that Dorothy and her sister Ernesta were getting dinner. Ernesta had stopped in on her way from California two days earlier and had invited Dorothy and the twins to go to Cape Cod with her for the summer. (Summer is a period when professors get no salary.)

He was pleasantly aware that when he finished marking the examination books he could take half an hour in which to reread the reports on Jorgenson's heavy-oil engine. Jorgenson was believed to have solved the problem of designing a light-weight high-speed engine that would drive a car as far on six cents' worth of crude oil as the present models will go on thirty cents' worth of gasoline. (Jorgenson would undoubtedly be a millionaire.)

He was unpleasantly aware that after dinner he would have to get into the dress clothes he had worn for the last eight years and go to the annual reception at the president's house, and he wasn't at all sure that he had a clean white tie and if he didn't Dorothy would have to wash and iron one for him and he was absolutely sure that Dorothy would have to wear the dress, made over from one in her trousseau, that she had worn to the last five faculty receptions.

ERNESTA and Dorothy were daughters of a family that had, as they put it, a comfortable income. That meant they had two maids and belonged to the country club and went to Maine for July and August, but that, as a matter of course, they didn't have a chauffeur. Marriage had meant to Ernesta that, as a matter of course, she did have a chauffeur. It was the ironical fact that Ernesta's husband, who didn't know a shim from a gasket, had three cars, and Dorothy's husband, who had once built an automobile engine from his own designs in the engineering laboratories, had no car.

Professor Gannett did not perceive that all these memories and associations had a common starting-point—that, indeed, they all revolved around one question, the question of how to pay one's bills though a college professor. It was a complete surprise to him when his hand, having laid down the last of the blue books, reached for a slip of paper, and that, instead of opening the report on Jorgenson's engine, he began to do simple sums in arithmetic.

He did sums for fifteen minutes, and being an engineer he could do a sum in a jiffy. It took him about three minutes of adding and subtracting to discover that when he had collected his last salary-check of the year and bought Dorothy's ticket and berth to Cape Cod he would be five hundred dollars behind. By the merest chance, he had that day received an invitation to teach in the six weeks' summer session. If he accepted, he would be paid three hundred dollars. But he would be very lucky and very economical indeed, if the three hundred dollars left anything over after he had paid his summer expenses and three months' house rent at forty dollars a month and sent Dorothy enough money to come back on. Within four minutes Professor Gannett had discovered that he would be just about five hundred dollars behind *if* he taught in the summer session. The fact is, he had known it all the time.

THE legislature had passed a bill at its last session appropriating a considerable sum of money for the increase of professorial salaries. It was generally understood that the Board of Regents had decided to set a minimum for assistant professors of twenty-four hundred a year. Gannett was getting twenty-two hundred. But supposing he could live as cheaply as he had been living, and there was no prospect that he could, it would take two years and a half of this promised increase to make up the five hundred he was already in debt.

Trumbull Gannett reflected on economy. It couldn't be the grocery and meat bills—Dorothy very well appreciated the difference between soup meat and porter-house steak, and the fact that soup meat could be chopped fine and molded into croquettes. It couldn't be clothes. A professor's family must wear clothes. The minimum requirements vary between California and Massachusetts. But at Monroe, which is one of the larger state universities in the Middle West, a professor must have a dress suit. It may be green with age; it may be so tight that he has to use a button-hook to get into the waistcoat; but it must have been originally a dress suit.

A professor's wife must have an evening gown; it need not be fashionable; indeed it must not be really low; but it must have been designed for wear after six o'clock. The Gannetts did not dare spend any less money for clothes.

It couldn't be books. Professor Gannett had bought nothing in the last two years but the necessary text-books his classes were using and he had long since given up all but one of the technical journals devoted to his subject.

It couldn't be service. Dorothy was doing practically everything, even the ironing, herself. As a matter of fact, that year they had done the washing together early Monday morning and hung the clothes to dry in the attic. Nobody can see you hanging clothes in the attic.

He couldn't give up his insurance—a man with a wife and two children must carry five thousand dollars insurance. Where could he cut down?

Professors are quite generally understood to know nothing of money. Professor Gannett went over and over the details of his expenditure without arriving at any solution of the problem. His mind was perfectly competent to deal with such a problem as how to secure high torque at low speed in a gasoline motor, but it was incapable of the decisive stroke with which any business man would have settled so glaring a discrepancy between income and outgo. He was no nearer a solution when the dinner-bell tinkled. He was apparently no nearer when he was adjusting the white tie that Dorothy had laundered for him at the last moment. And he was certainly no nearer when he shook hands with the president of the university for the sixth time in six years. His mind continued to consider the sum of five hundred dollars. The idea of five hundred dollars kept popping into his mind as if regularly forced there by a mechanical device, as a camshaft opens an intake-valve, irresistibly, regularly, rhythmically.

When he and Dorothy were going to bed afterward, he was preoccupied with the five hundred dollars. Dorothy tentatively introduced the subject of money. "Oh, Tom," she said suddenly—she had a habit of calling him Tom because the name Trumbull sounded so formal—"Oh, Tom," she said, apropos of nothing at all, "aren't we terribly behind?"

Trumbull shook his head.

"No," he said. "No, not terribly. We're close to the edge, of course. We always are. But I'm going to teach in the summer session—we'll pull out all right. We always do."

It was a lie. It was a revealing lie. It revealed to Trumbull Gannett that he was not going to teach in the summer session. The moment Dorothy was out of town he was going to do something else, something that would actually bring him five hundred dollars. He didn't know what it would be. But it would be something: He would get that five hundred dollars if he had to use a blackjack. He clenched his large, strong hands. He would wring that five hundred dollars from however reluctant a world.

With an effort he unclenched his hands. He didn't want Dorothy to see that gesture. He must not let her know how serious the situation was.

He stroked her hair gently. She looked tragically worn. She lived the life of a charwoman, really. She was a servant, doing the hard physical labor of the household. He put his arm around her shoulders and kissed her. She turned and rested her head on his shoulder, leaned on him.

"Don't think about money," he said. "Don't think about money all summer. Forget it, won't you?"

"I wish you were going too," she said wistfully. "I hate to be away from you all summer—I never have been."

"We won't ever do it again," Trumbull Gannett assured her.

III

TRUMBULL GANNETT walked slowly back from the railway station after putting Dorothy and Ernesta and the

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When he and Dorothy were going to bed she tentatively introduced the subject of money. "Oh, Tom," she said suddenly, "Aren't we terribly behind?"

felt very much alone. He was very tired. He wished more than anything else that he could have gone to Cape Cod with Dorothy and the children. He would like to laze away a summer on a sunny beach, and take the twins clamming, and sail a boat. The long summer vacation was one of the special privileges of the college professor. It was expected partly to make up for his small income. But actually he couldn't afford to take a vacation. He had always taught in the summer session for six weeks and spent the remaining six weeks in the engineering laboratories at work on his heavy-oil engine. But you couldn't work out a heavy-oil engine in six weeks of the year. A job like that needed all your time—you needed to work on it continuously. From the first Jorgenson was bound to beat him.

JORGENSON was a mechanic who had struck out for himself, started a small engine shop, built one thing on another. He lived in overalls, in the shop, working with his hands. Jorgenson wasn't annoyed because his dress clothes were old-fashioned, shiny, too tight. Jorgenson didn't have to wear dress clothes. Jorgenson didn't lunch at the faculty club. He ate his lunch out of a tin bucket.

A professor was theoretically a man of science, freed by a decent and certain income to devote his whole energy to a chosen problem, taking his real pay in the satisfaction of making a contribution to knowledge, to civilization. Actually he was more likely to spend his spare hours worrying about the grocery bill than in the pursuit of knowledge. He would be a full professor some day. But what of it? His salary had been increased a thousand dollars in six years. But the prices of most things had doubled in that time. He was actually getting less now than then. In the meantime he had had two children. Would the salary of a full professor, by the time he got it, make it possible for him to send his sons through college?

And as for honor—didn't all the worthwhile honors go to men like Jorgenson, men in overalls? It was not the gifted Professor Langley who flew the first airplane, but the obscure Wright brothers, with their bicycle shop.

Trumbull Gannett paused, without consciously willing to do so, in front of the open door of an automobile repair shop. He could never pass such a shop without wishing to go in and look around. His original ambition had been to build motor-cars. And now he watched two men hoisting the engine out of a truck and wished he were one of them. He would like to tear down that motor, to see just what had happened inside it. And then he would like to put it together again so that it would run better than when it was new.

Trumbull Gannett stood in the wide alley of the shop, his eyes full of dreams and his heart full of wishes. Suddenly the door of the little office at one side of the entrance opened and a workman with his coat on came out. He turned, as he passed through the door, to speak over his shoulder to some one behind him.

"I DON'T have to," he was saying, not without a certain bitterness.

A large man in shirt sleeves appeared in the door of the little office. "I'll make it seventy-five cents an hour and time and a half for overtime," he said angrily.

"Eighty cents or nothing."

"I won't pay it," said the man in shirt sleeves.

"All right," the workman answered. "I'll go find somebody that will."

Trumbull Gannett walked on up the street toward the house doing sums in his head. An eight-hour day at eighty cents an hour came to six dollars and forty cents. And if a man worked ten hours, two hours of overtime, he would get eight dollars and eighty cents a day, fifty-two dollars and eighty cents a week, more than twenty-seven hundred dollars a year. That was more than an assistant professor got. Five hundred dollars more. It seemed incredible.

If Trumbull Gannett had been a professor of Latin he might have shrugged his shoulders and reflected cynically: "Such is the way of the machine age." But he was a professor of gas engineering, and the idea that a boy who had spent three or four years hanging around a garage and picking up tools and the tricks of the trade could earn more money in twelve months than he, who had taken a four-years' course in engineering and had done two years of graduate work and eight years of teaching and used tools all his life, rather took him aback. He had perhaps known it before, but he had never realized it before.

AND then he reflected that a professor did not work fifty-two weeks in a year; he worked thirty-five or thirty-six weeks. He figured quickly that he was actually getting more money per hour than the mechanic had asked for—not much, but a little. That gratified him. And he had the whole summer free to do with as he pleased—even to increase his year's income. He had known that, too, but now it broke on his mind with all the force of a new and significant fact.

Gannett had a sudden impulse to go back and tell the man in shirt sleeves that he would take that seventy-five cents an hour with time and a half for overtime. But he couldn't, of course. What would the president of the university say if one of his professors spent a summer working as a mechanic in a repair shop? Logically he could hardly object to a professor's earning enough money in the summer to go on professing during the college year. But Gannett knew that the president could hardly treat the matter logically.

The small house seemed strangely empty without Dorothy and the twins. The thought of the faculty club did not entice him. He would go there to dinner but that was as much as he wanted. He was sick of professors. Mechanically he picked

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up the evening paper and read the headlines. He turned a page, reading idly. He saw the line "Eight Dollars a Day" over a brief paragraph. He read:

Kansas City, Kansas, June 11—Wages for farm hands in the wheat country have now passed all records. Word comes from the South that harvest hands are demanding $6.50 a day and getting it. E. C. Stiles, who has a thousand acres in wheat near Pawnee City, said to-day that he would pay $7.00 a day this year and everybody welcome. Tractor hands are now getting $8.00 a day.

Trumbull Gannett threw down the paper and started for the faculty club. He met Wilkinson as he was going in. Wilkinson was a professor of geology. He asked Gannett if Gannett intended to teach in the summer session.

"No," Gannett heard himself say. "No, I'm going out West to study power farming. I want to see what they are actually doing in the field."

Instinctively he straightened his body, raised his head. He was taller than the average man, a little under weight, but large-boned. His hands were soft now, but they hadn't always been soft. They were large, strong hands. A week or two of hard work would put him in shape again. Hard work would do him good. He wondered how uncertain following the harvest would be. He wanted twelve weeks of work at fifty dollars a week. Could he follow the harvest and live on ten dollars a week and save forty? Forty dollars a week would come to four hundred and eighty dollars for the summer—almost enough to pay all his debts, almost enough to start even in the fall. He realized that Wilkinson was saying:

"I should think that would be very interesting—very."

And he knew that Wilkinson was wondering how he could afford such a trip. Gannett wondered what Wilkinson would say if he told him how he was going to afford it. The way to save the railway fare had just occurred to him. But he did not tell Wilkinson. He decided not to tell anybody, not even Dorothy.

IV

TRUMBULL GANNETT proceeded like the criminal he was. He had told one lie; why not a dozen? In two days he had rented the house for the summer season for the flat sum of one hundred dollars. He wrote Dorothy as much, saying—he was not yet equal to telling her the lie direct—that he was staying at the faculty club, and thus implying that he expected to stay there all summer. He secured a pile of the club's stationery, letterheads and envelopes. He interviewed Mims, who sat behind the desk at the club and sold cigars and attended to the forwarding of mail. He had to trust Mims—there was no other way of concealing from Dorothy his absence from Monroe. And it was necessary to deceive Dorothy. He felt that Dorothy would disapprove of what he was about to do. Dorothy would endeavor to dissuade him. He did not intend to be dissuaded.

In the afternoon of June fourteenth, Trumbull Gannett carried a small traveling-bag to his locker in the engineering laboratories. When he returned to the faculty club, the bag contained a suit of khaki-colored overalls, convincingly stained with cylinder-oil and cup-grease, and a pair of heavy pliers that he had made himself, out of exactly the right steel, and a curious socket-wrench of his own design. At the club he added two of the blue chambray shirts that workmen wear, a grain-sack, and the club stationery in a heavy manila envelope.

He spent the evening writing two letters to Dorothy. These he deposited with Mims to be mailed at intervals of twenty-four hours. The first contained a check for fifty dollars, half the money he had received for the house. The second one complained, though lightly, of not having received a really satisfying letter from her. He knew in advance that Dorothy would not have time to write a long letter in the first two or three days.

At eleven o'clock he put on an old suit of clothes with a blue shirt and a disreputable old felt hat. At a little before midnight he slipped down the stairs like a thief and into the street. He walked rapidly. The town had gone to sleep. But the street-cars were still running. He avoided the main streets, cut across lots, struck the railway a hundred yards above the station. A small shop at the street corner was still open. He went in and bought a plug of tobacco. He had learned to chew tobacco as a boy of sixteen. Naturally he had not chewed tobacco for years. But now it gave him a profound satisfaction to bite off a corner of the plug and tuck it away in his cheek.

He slipped down the tracks to a shed and, standing in the dark shadow, he opened his bag and took out the grain-sack. He stuffed the overalls and the shirts and the manila envelope and the tools in it, tied the sack with a cord and threw the cheap bag away. The grain sack, with its contents, made a small bundle that could be carried under his arm or swung over his shoulder. And now, with his disreputable hat pulled down over his eyes and his bundle under his arm, in his blue shirt and his old clothes, he might safely have braved the bright lights of the station. No one would have recognized him.

The train for the West was nearly due but he didn't move. Instead he put his bundle on the ground and sat down on it and waited, as if he were reconsidering his adventure. When the train pulled in to the station, he walked slowly up to a point opposite the engine. As the train started, he stepped alongside, caught the railing and swung aboard the platform of the blind baggage. He leaned his back against the end of the car, braced his feet against the irons, pulled his hat down more firmly over his eyes. As the train gathered speed, clicking over the switches, boring into the night, something like a grin animated the face of Professor Trumbull Gannett.

V

THIRTY hours later, a tall young man, very pale under a thick coat of cinders, registered at the hotel in Pawnee, Kansas, as T. Gannett, ate an enormous breakfast of ham and eggs, and went to bed. He slept heavily. He did not waken until noon. Then he arose, washed off some of the cinders, ate a dinner that would have staggered Dorothy Gannett, and strolled down the main street.

He had seen mile after mile of wheat that morning from his vantage-point behind the tender of the express he had caught out of Omaha. He had heard nothing but wheat at dinner in the little hotel. The town was wheat mad. But T. Gannett was not sure he wanted to harvest wheat. He passed two garages with an inquiring eye. The second was the larger. He paused to look in. The place was full of flivvers awaiting repairs. The yard outside contained more flivvers and several trucks. While he stood watching, a farmer drove up with a big truck to inquire if there was any chance of getting the valves ground before Saturday.

The proprietor shook his head. "No chance," he said. "No chance before the Fourth of July."

The farmer swore and moved on.

T. Gannett approached the garage man. "Are you the boss?" he asked.

"Sure," he said, "but didn't you hear what I said just now to that fellow? We're so full up now we can't take care of our regular customers."

"I don't want any work done—I want to do some," T. Gannett said.

THE boss looked at him sharply. "You a mechanic?" he asked.

"Yes," said T. Gannett.

"What's the matter with you—why aren't you workin'?"

"Just got off the train this morning—yours is the first place I've hit."

Again the boss gave him a sharp appraising glance. "I've got work all right—work for ten men. But what I'd like to know in advance is are you a real guy or ought I to put you on the gas pump?"

"I'm a real guy," said T. Gannett.

"Can you lap in a piston?"

"Sure."

"How long'll you stay?"

"All summer—if the price is right."

"I'm payin' seventy-five cents an hour to real mechanics," the man admitted, "but——"

"How much for overtime?"

"We work ten hours these days—double time on Sundays."

"I'll start at that," T. Gannett said.

"When?"

"In half an hour."

"All right," said the Kansan, "you're on. What's your name?"

"T. Gannett."

"Tom?"

"Tom," said Professor Trumbull Gannett without a flicker.

"My name's Smith," the boss said.

That night Professor Gannett sent the first letter on to Mims to be remailed to Dorothy and wired Mims his new address.

For a week T. Gannett suffered all the tortures that await the man who is not accustomed to physical labor. His hands were bruised, blistered, skinned; his fingernails were split and broken; he ached as if he had been beaten with a club. Those first nights he took off his shoes and dropped on the bed, and slept—too tired to undress. But gradually his hands hardened, the soreness left his body, he adjusted himself to his task.

The unaccustomed exertion came easier. He no longer gritted his teeth when he applied a wrench to a frozen stud. He swung the weight of his body against it easily, confidently. He had ceased seriously to try to get the grease out of his skin. It was enough if his hands did not smudge

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As the train started he stepped alongside, caught the railing and swung aboard the platform of the blind baggage.

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the paper when he wrote to Dorothy. He worked ten hours a day seven days a week.

After three weeks he began actually to enjoy himself. One night he drove twenty miles out into the dusty country with a wrecking-car to bring in a disabled machine. It was one of those July nights when Westerners say they can hear the corn grow—one of those still hot nights when no one can sleep happily indoors. But the breeze that came over the dash of the flying car cooled his sweating body. He hoisted the wreck with a swing. He liked it. He liked the feel of his own physical strength.

In the weeks following he often drove the wrecking-car at night, after his day's work. Sometimes he did emergency repairs by the light of a flaring gasoline torch, sometimes with only the light of the harvest moon coming up out of the wheat stubble like a great red wafer. No member of the faculty at Monroe would have recognized him in his grease-stained overalls, his crumpled felt hat, with the cud of tobacco in his cheek. His manner, his walk, his speech had all changed. He was developing something very like a second personality—rougher, sturdier, happier than his old one. He had almost wholly lost his old sense of being watched, of having to live and act in a certain way, the way of a college professor. He was free.

Not until the first days of September, after nine weeks of freedom, did the thought of the five hundred dollars again obsess him. He had been averaging sixty dollars a week, but it wasn't enough. He had had to spend twenty. Most of the twenty went for food. He ate as he had never eaten before. There was no controlling such an appetite as he had for food. It had to be satisfied.

Dorothy would be back in Monroe on the twentieth. He must be there first. He had safely only two weeks more in which to make that five hundred. The work was already slacking and he had less than four hundred dollars in the money-belt next his skin. The loss of a single Sunday at double time would cut down his week's wages by fifteen dollars. He wouldn't make it. And he had to make it. He had set his heart on making that five hundred clear, on arriving in Monroe with that five hundred dollars in cash. He began to hang around the garage after supper whether there was emergency work or not. He wasn't going to miss a trip into the country, with its extra pay.

ONE afternoon, just as he was washing up for supper, the telephone rang. Somebody was in trouble out on the Pawnee road, five miles west. The wrecking-car was away on a trip, but Gannett assured the man he'd be out in half an hour. He threw a tow-rope into the boss's flivver, cranked it, and started west in a cloud of dust.

The wrecked car proved to be a 1918 Fortner six. The farmer who owned it had tried to turn a sharp corner at twenty miles an hour and struck a telephone-pole head-on. The impact had sent him through the wind-shield and dropped him astride the hood. His face was cut up by broken glass, but his only other injuries were to his temper. The car looked a complete wreck at first glance. The telephone-pole fitted neatly between the spring horns. The radiator was dished. The front axle had been bent in a semicircle. There was no telling whether the motor had been driven back on the frame or not.

"How long will it take to get it repaired?" the man asked.

"Couple of weeks."

"Couple of weeks!" the man reapeated. "I need it to-morrow. I've got to have it by Saturday. I'm going on a trip Saturday. Promised to take the whole family to Kansas City."

T. Gannett shook his head.

"By Monday, then?"

"Couldn't be done—if you go in this car, you'll wait two weeks."

"Guess I'd better get me a new car," the man said. "Can't disappoint the family when I've just put nine thousand bushels in the elevator."

"Guess you'd better, then," T. Gannett said. He had hooked up the tow-rope and pulled the Fortner off the telephone-pole. But he couldn't figure any way to haul it into Pawnee City. The boss's flivver had no crane and the Fortner was in no condition to run on its own front wheels. He would have to come back with the wrecking-car.

"WHAT'LL it cost to fix her up?"

T. Gannett shook his head.

"May be three hundred—may be five hundred. You can't tell until it's torn down."

"What's your guess?"

"My guess is that there's about ten days work on it—they'll charge you a dollar and a quarter an hour for that—say one hundred and twenty-five—and then anywhere from a hundred and fifty to three or four hundred for new parts. A new radiator alone will cost you better than a hundred."

"It isn't worth fixing."

"Sure, the Fortner is a good car."

"It's a hell of a car," the man said. His cuts had begun to sting him.

"I'll take a chance on it if you'll sell it cheap."

"How cheap?"

"I'll give you a hundred for it as it stands."

"Make it a hundred and fifty."

T. Gannett shook his head firmly.

"Nope," he said.

"Split the difference?"

"Nope," said T. Gannett. With forced calm he cranked the flivver and got in. He had never bargained before. This bargain mattered. But if he was going to bargain—he was going to bargain. He wasn't going to be beaten down by a farmer who had harvested twenty thousand dollars' worth of wheat.

"All right," said the man. "I'll take you—a hundred dollars will buy a couple of spare tires for my new car."

T. Gannett got out of the flivver, opened his money-belt, and abstracted five twenties.

"Done," he said briefly.

He came back two hours later with the wrecking-car. He had made an arrangement with Smith by which he was to repair the car in the shop in his own time. The next morning he was up at five o'clock to tear the car down and learn just how badly it had been injured. The motor was happily all there. By ten o'clock Gannett was able to make a complete list of parts and wire it to Kansas City. Parts were not so scarce then as they became a year later; he got them all within a week. He continued to do his ten-hours' stint for Smith's garage. At night he did six or seven hours more on the Fortner. After a week of this he had to take a Sunday morning off for sleep. But he finished the job on the fifteenth of September. He had spent one hundred and thirty-four dollars and ninety-three cents for parts. The car was as good as it had ever been; perhaps better; it lacked only painting. T. Gannett hadn't time to paint it. He offered it for sale as it was for eight hundred dollars. Smith said he would give six hundred. T. Gannett was in a hurry, but he told Smith to come again. Smith offered six-fifty. Two days later T. Gannett sold the Fortner for seven hundred and fifty to a real-estate agent who had the cash.

T. Gannett looked at his watch. He could catch the noon train for Kansas City if he hurried. He had won. He had made his five hundred on the car alone. He had more than four hundred besides. He needn't ride the blind baggage. He could treat himself to a berth in the Pullman. He would arrive in Monroe with nine hundred dollars—in bills.

Smith was so outraged at T. Gannett for quitting that he had to tell Smith the truth.

Smith looked at T. Gannett and did not smile. He was very much in earnest.

"Look here," he said. "What do you make as a professor?"

T. Gannett told him.

"Hell!" said Smith. "If you'll stick here I'll take you into partnership with me. I need a man like you for a partner. You'll make five thousand the first year or I'll give you the shop."

T. Gannett shook his head.

"I'll see you next summer," he said.

"Listen," Smith urged. "You and I know there's money in used cars. People get tired of a car in a couple of seasons. Then they begin to notice little things—a rattle here and a dent there. Most any car two years old can be made good as new with a few dollars' worth of new parts and a few days' work. You made a good thing out o' this Fortner. Why stop? Why not do it every week? One swallow don't make a summer."

T. Gannett was interested; but he wanted to get home; he tore himself away.

VI

PROFESSOR TRUMBULL GANNETT dropped off the train at Monroe at eight o'clock in the evening of September nineteenth. He was wearing the suit he had worn three months before, but he had exchanged the grain-sack for a proper suitcase and he had a new hat. He looked presentable, but he didn't particularly care whether he did or not. He could feel that fat oiled-silk belt around his waist. He took a taxicab to the house.

It was only when he stood facing his own front door that he had any doubts. There were lights in the house. Either the visiting professor to whom he had rented it hadn't left or Dorothy had come a day early. It was Dorothy, of course. And how he did want to see her! He wanted to see Dorothy more than anything else in the world. But he shrank a little from the meeting. Had he not deceived her? He saw now that he needn't have; that he shouldn't have.

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The front door opened. Dorothy stood there. He called to her. He ran up the walk and threw his arms around her and hugged her. He kissed her. Dorothy kissed him. And then she drew back. She spoke. She spoke words that most husbands have heard from their wives but that Professor Trumbull Gannett had never heard from his wife until now. She said:

"Where have you been?"

But Dorothy had, after all, only one serious reproach when he had told her. It was that he hadn't taken her along.

"I will take you next summer," he said.

Dorothy knitted her brows.

"You can't do a thing like that again, Tom. Really, it wouldn't be good for you."

"Did you ever see me look better in my life?"

Dorothy smiled at his tanned face.

"No," she admitted. And then she saw his hands.

"Oh!" she cried. "Your poor hands!"

"Poor hands nothing. They're tough as sole leather. They'll soften up again in a week and I'll get the grease out of them."

"But your finger-nails!"

"They'll grow again."

"But, Tom," Dorothy protested, "you can't spend your summers like that. You need a vacation. You need——"

"I got what I needed—exactly what I needed," he told her. He lifted the money-belt. "Think what it means—we won't owe a nickle and we're starting in the year four hundred dollars to the good. Why, it means I can go on being a professor."

AND Dorothy, being a sensible person and open to logic, eventually agreed with him. He borrowed three thousand dollars last winter and during the Christmas holidays he and Dorothy went out to Pawnee, Kansas, and made a deal with Mort Smith, and invested the money in used cars which are a good deal cheaper in December than they are a few months later, and ordered new parts so they'd be on hand in the spring. They went back to Pawnee City in June, and Smith and Gannett are now turning those used cars into cash as fast as T. Gannett can put them into first-class running condition. They ought to clean up several thousand dollars on the summer's work.

T. Gannett has already bought the car which little Richard Gannett, or little Philip Gannett, whichever it was, promised to Mrs. Stewart's small daughter. It is a Durbrow of the year 1915, which is a long time ago, even for a Durbrow, but just the same the old boat has sporting lines and rides like a Pullman sleeper, and when, at thirty-five miles an hour, the professor steps on her tail, the motor doesn't try to jump out of the hood; it just calmly turns up the desired R. P. M.'s.

T. Gannett and Dorothy Gannett and the twins will start from Pawnee in this car about the twentieth of September and drive the eight hundred miles in about four days, so as to arrive in time for the opening of the first semester.

If Mrs. Stewart survives her first glimpse of the Gannetts in their car, she may be confirmed in her theory that they have inherited money. She will certainly be confirmed in her suspicion that it isn't Dorothy's cleverness. Even Mrs. Bender, stanch protagonist that she is, will be forced to admit that it can't be management.

Mrs. Bender will learn the truth. But it is extremely doubtful if Mrs. Stewart will ever discover the dark secret of how the Gannetts do it.

Monroe is a long way from Pawnee City, Kansas.

A Place Forgotten

By Grace Hazard Conkling

COME, let me tell you of an ancient city
With worn bleached tiles and faint, peach-blossom walls,
Where nightingales will sing all day for pity,
And great magnolias shiver like waterfalls
Gone white in midair leaping from their mountain,
With whiteness like the silver of a bird
Or flashing of some frost-bewildered fountain,
Waiting for you to melt it with a word!
There is a pool, there is a woven alley
Of bougainvillea aching in the light,
And a hot tawny wind blows from the valley
And stars get tangled in the trees at night.
I want to make you see the purple fringes
And core of gold that are a passion-flower,
To swing the Desert Gate on rusty hinges,
And hear the bronze bell warn me from its tower!

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Photos by White's Studio.

Hundreds know him this way——thousands see him thus.

The Silent Art of Joe Jackson

By Robert C. Benchley

Here is another national laugh-maker—second in the series of headline entertainers that EVERYBODY'S began in January with Irene Franklin. Miss Franklin does it by song, Joe Jackson by pantomime, and next month comes Beatrice Herford, popular monologist.

THE orchestra is playing very quietly a tune which you are never quite able to identify. It is the tune they usually play while the jugglers are on.

Across the stage comes a messenger boy, wheeling a bicycle. Without creating the slightest illusion of being on a real errand, he disappears through a gap in the back-drop, leaving the wheel propped against the scenery.

This is the end of Act I. The music continues its dreamy and indistinct murmuring to an empty stage.

Suddenly a tramp appears, as if by mistake, from the imitation distance. Some one in the audience applauds sharply and he quickly vanishes, like a startled fawn.

Very cautiously he essays another entrance, deprecating further applause by raising a warning finger to his lips. And yet withal he smiles, as if to show that he realizes as well as any one how very silly it all is. It is a beautiful smile, accompanied by a self-depreciatory shrug of the shoulders and a coy ducking of the head, shy and yet confident that the audience will understand, often shame-faced to the point of having to be concealed behind the hand and yet at the same time including every one in the theatre in its call for sympathetic companionship.

He is an extremely ragged tramp, but his clothing is adequate. It is more than adequate. The coat and trousers are so vast that they give the effect of a toga, necessitating frequent clutching at their wide folds in order to turn them in unison with the body of their owner. Otherwise they might still be facing the audience while the occupant was presenting an unimpressive profile.

Advancing in a debonair manner to the front of the stage, he espies something on the boards at his feet. He has almost gone past it by it (whatever it is) before it attracts his attention, and the question arises in his mind whether or not it is worth while going back to pick up.

At first he thinks that he will, and makes a slight move toward it. Then the practical man within him asserts himself and he gives up the project as too trifling to waste valuable time on—And yet, why not? Other men have stooped to pick up little things like that. Why not he? He starts again toward it and again is seized by doubt and inertia. With a magnificent burst of moral courage he turns his back and starts to walk in the opposite direction.

By this time the audience is in a frightful state of sympathetic indecision. They hesitate with him. They want him to pick it up and yet they dread to have him take the plunge. A great sigh of relief goes up when he is finally overcome by his curiosity and, stooping over, grasps the whatever-it-is gingerly between his thumb and middle finger.

It turns out to be something undesirable and sticky and is quickly dropped. And half comes the apologetic smile and the

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shrugging shoulders, as if to say: "Hasn't the whole performance been too absurd?"

Then, in the midst of a little extemporaneous dancing figure, he discovers the bicycle.

Once more the frightful period of inability to make up his mind. He advances and retreats. He circles the spot and makes tiny lunges toward the coveted machine, sometimes frightened away by sharp bursts of applause from knowing ones in the audience, sometimes driven back by his own fear of coming too rapidly to a decision on so momentous a question as the theft of a bicycle. Once he becomes so nervous that he disappears entirely behind the scenery. Three times he touches the saddle, and each time is startled into a very bad imitation of innocent and aimless sauntering. Finally, after pleading with uplifted finger for the audience to connive with him to the extent of keeping quiet, he leaps into the seat and is off.

There is very little riding done, however. At the first turn a particularly ungraceful spill occurs. This is followed by a long period of futile attempting to hold up the bicycle and reach for the hat which lies on the ground just out of easy reach. Then there is a great deal of trouble with the horn which, in some mysterious manner, suddenly becomes detached from the handle-bars and finds itself in his hand. This causes him a vast amount of embarrassment for he doesn't know what to do with it. He tries putting it in his pocket, but his pocket has, for the time being, disappeared in the ample folds of his coat and can not be located. Appealingly he smiles at the audience, showing them the horn as if to say: "You see for yourself what a position this puts me in. A horn in my hand and nowhere to put it. Could anything be more *gauche?*"

It is finally placed on the ground, where it is stepped on several times before he is able to remount, an undeniably funny scene which, however, could be done by many low comedians, while almost everything else in the act could be done by no comedian, high or low, but Joe Jackson.

FOR Joe Jackson is a master of pantomime and the intrusion of a noise, however funny, is superfluous. Pantomime has come down through the ages, meaning the white-faced clown, expressing his emotions (which consist chiefly of wide-eyed and round-mouthed fear) by extravagant gestures and facial contortions. Joe Jackson has refined it to an estate bordering on high comedy. He has discarded the split stick for a persistent cuff which dangles at his wrist in spite of his attempts to throw it away. His face is at rest, except for the ingratiating smile. His gestures are limited to a shrug of the shoulders and an admonitory finger raised to the lips.

Yet by means of these gentle agencies he lays his emotions bare. And they are not the unnatural, exaggerated emotions usual to the pantomimist, grotesque fear, towering rage and devastating pain. They are the subtler emotions of embarrassment, shyness and vacillating indecision which every one has known.

All the unfortunate incidents which occur in the course of Joe Jackson's act, the floating handlebars, the lost hat, the undetachable cuff and the final complete disintegration of the bicycle itself, seem to be happening for the first time. They are genuinely upsetting to him, and he gives the impression that not for the world would he have had this particular thing happen on this particular night of all nights. Furthermore, he seems quite sure that if you will but bear with him everything will come out all right in the end. He is smilingly confident that all trouble is but transitory, and that God's in His heaven, although certainly he is given little enough encouragement in his faith. There is about Joe Jackson that touch of pathos which distinguishes all great comedians, and in his art that approach to tragedy which marks great comedy.

AND yet originally his act was not a comedy act. Twenty years ago he ran away from the Austrian military school in which he, with others of the aristocracy and wealthy merchant class, was being trained for the occupation selected for him by his parents, that of an officer in the army. Four of his cousins were in the same school, and received their commissions, but somehow Joe felt that he would prefer the life of a circus-rider. As he had already won the amateur bicycle championship of Austria, the circus authorities were quite willing for him to make the change. In fact, every one was happy but his family, and they considered themselves disgraced and Joe an outcast.

His act, however, was straight trick riding, later developing into bicycle polo, at which he became so expert that he was able to take his own polo team about Europe offering a purse of 15,000 kronen for a defeat. He then went on tour in vaudeville as a "fancy" rider.

One night in London his team-mate, who was supposed to furnish the comedy for the pair, was unable to go on owing to a slight dizziness and inability to articulate clearly, and Jackson was forced to carry both comedy and straight rôles. He was made up for the first time, and he considered it a very funny make-up. He also considered his comedy very funny, but he was out-voted on this point. His friends told him after the performance that it would be much better for him if he were to stick to straight bicycle riding. "Leave the comedy to the funny guys," they said.

It would be interesting sometime to organize a society made up of friends who offered the wrong advice to potential stars.

It was not until he came to America ten years ago on vaudeville tour that he finally discarded the serious art of fancy riding and took up the much more serious art of being funny. Some nameless manager in Minneapolis, whose service to humanity can never be fully estimated, came to him one night and said:

"Joe, I want you to make your act entirely pantomime, with only enough of the riding to get you on and off the stage."

This was rather a radical departure for a serious-minded bicycle rider who had been told by his friends never to be funny again. But he took the manager's advice and the result may be seen at the Hippodrome any week-day afternoon at four or evening at ten. There may be more thrilling bicycle acts on the American stage, but there is no funnier pantomime.

His act as is probably the case with most comedy acts of this nature, has been built by accretion. An accident one night draws an unexpected laugh and is incorporated into the performance to the delight of future audiences.

In this way, for instance, came his little trick of glancing, in an expressionless manner, at an imaginary watch during one of his few periods of straight riding. It is all the more effective because it precedes a nasty spill. This bit of business came as the result of a real emergency.

In a certain town on the road it was necessary for the company to catch a train which left a few minutes after the final curtain. Jackson's act was the last on the bill. The manager had told him that immediately following his exit he was to pile his bicycle into a cab and, with his make-up on rush to the train where the rest of the company would be waiting for him.

Arrangement was made with one of the stage-hands to signal Jackson from the wings when it was time for him to bring his act to a close. As is usual in cases of this kind, where Fate is playing a part, the stage-hand became so engrossed in watching that he forgot his duty. Jackson rode and rode, feeling that his time must be nearly up and yet waiting for the signal before taking his final fall. At last, perceiving that nothing like appreciation of the exigency was shining in the eye of the stage-hand, he took an imaginary watch from his pocket and looked at it significantly in the hope that it would recall the wandering mind to a sense of its duty. It was not intended for the audience but for a lone man in the wings. The audience took it for its very own, however, and loved it. Some one who had been "out front" later complimented Jackson on this touch which is now a part of his act.

BUT Joe Jackson's success is not made up of accidents. It is the result of painstaking thought.

His basic principle is that the audience must see that the accident is going to happen before he himself is aware of it. They must see that the handle-bars are out of place before he sees it. They must see that his cuff is still dangling at his wrist while he believes that he has successfully thrown it away. They must see that he is about to sit on the misplaced sprocket before he makes that uncomfortable discovery for himself. They must be allowed to feel superior.

And yet he does not let them get too far above him. He is constantly drawing them back to his level by little tricks of a more subtle nature, so that they are always recognizing their own mental struggles in his. They laugh over his indecision about the Thing and his quandary over the horn, because they too have suffered the same state of mind.

During this *Sturm und Drang* of indecision he forces himself to go through the actual mental processes each day; otherwise, he says, the action would look mechanical. That is, while hovering over the object on the ground, he is actually saying to himself: "Is it a cigar?...No, I guess...wait a minute now, it may be... no, don't be silly, Joe...well, it won't do any harm to pick it up."

Twice a day and six days in the week he goes through this wearing argument with himself over something on the floor which doesn't exist at all, simply in order that he may create a perfect illusion. No artist could do more.

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If Winter Comes

By A. S. M. Hutchinson

Author of "Once Aboard the Lugger," "The Happy Warrior," etc.

III

THE STORY

IN THE year 1912, Mark Sabre, at the age of thirty-four, is discovered by an old preparatory-school classmate, one Hapgood, living in a pleasantly picturesque English country town, Penny Green, suburb of the city of Tidborough. Hapgood reports that Sabre's ceaseless inquiry into causes and his sympathetic understanding of people, traits that earned for him the nickname of Puzzlehead, are still paramount, that his wife, Mabel, is a distinctly nice girl, and childless.

In business Sabre is associated with the old house of Fortune, East & Sabre, ecclesiastical and scholastic furnishers and designers, who have been long established in Tidborough and whose prestige in their line is enviable. Something of the difference in interests and temperament between Mark and his wife is brought out in the numerous annoyances that her model housekeeping causes him, by his distaste for her fondness for gossip and the exclusive society of social equals, by her practicality and her lack of imagination.

Mabel is indifferent to Mark's fondness for books, his constant groping for light on the odd business of life, his seemingly commonplace friends, and his occasional sallies of humorous comment on subjects most grave and important from her point of view. Particularly obnoxious to her is his low taste for the bicycle, on which he prefers to make his daily trips to and from Tidborough.

That part of his work to which Sabre brings special enthusiasm is the publication of educational text-books, invariably referred to by Mabel as "those lesson books," a term of disdain applied to even his projected masterpiece, which is to be known as just "England," or "Sabre's England."

One morning as Sabre is bicycling toward Tidborough he stops to exchange greetings with Lord and Lady Tybar, recently returned after two years' absence abroad. Lady Tybar, who before her marriage had been Nona Holiday, was an old friend and neighbor of Sabre's, whom she calls Marko.

On reaching the office Sabre learns that his junior business associate, Twyning, has been taken into partnership by the Reverend Sebastian Fortune, senior member of the firm. Mark, mindful of Fortune's similar promise to him, asks the elder man for an explanation, but fails to get a satisfactory one. Disappointed, he decides to spend the rest of the day at home with his wife. He arrives just in time to receive a note from Nona Tybar inviting him to call.

Mabel, after telling him that her rector, the Reverend Mr. Boom Bagshaw, is coming to luncheon, reads Nona's letter and by her comments on the familiar tone of it, starts a disagreeable discussion. Mark's patience is further strained by the clergyman's mannerisms and positive opinions. After his departure there is a sharp passage of words between husband and wife, precipitated by Mabel's jealous suspicions of Nona. Mabel, in anger, slams the door as she leaves Mark, causing a cup to fall and break on the floor.

Chapter Eight (*Continued*)

SABRE regarded the broken cup much as Sir Isaac Newton presumably regarded the fallen apple. He "worked back" from the cup through the events of the day, and through the events of the day returned to the cup. It interested him to find that the fragments on the floor were as logical a result of the movements of the day as they would have been of getting the small hand-ax out of the woodshed, aiming a blow at the cup, and hitting the cup.

He thought, "I started to break that cup when I rustled the newspaper at breakfast. I went on when I suddenly came back and got into that niggling business over why I had come back. Went on when I walked off to my room after that letter business. Practically took up the ax when I couldn't say, 'Well, how's the Garden Home going on?' at dinner. And smashed it when I chaffed about Bagshaw an hour ago. Rum business. Rotten business."

That was the day's epitaph. But for the murder of the cup he found—gone to bed and lying awake—a culprit other than himself. He thought, "It was meeting Nona made me come home like that. But if that had been the first time I'd ever met Nona I shouldn't have returned. So it goes back further than that. Nine—ten years. The day she married Tybar. If she hadn't married Tybar she'd have married me. The cup wouldn't have been broken. Nona broke that cup . . ."

Chapter Nine

Nona Pays a Visit

THESE events were on a Monday. On the following Thursday Nona came to see him at his office.

She was announced through the speaking-tube on his desk: "Lady Tybar to see you, sir."

Nona! But he was not really surprised. He had taken no notice of her letter. He had wanted to go up to Northrepps to see her, but he had not been. When two days passed and still he prevented himself from going, he began to have the feeling—somehow—that she would come to see him. It was the third day and she was here—down-stairs.

"Ask her to come up," he said.

She came in. She wore (as Sabre saw it) "a pale-blue sort of thing" and "a sort of black hat." He had thought of it as an odd thing, in his thoughts of her since their meeting, that, though he could always have some kind of notion what other women were wearing, he never could remember any detail of Nona's dress.

But it was her face he always looked at.

She stood still immediately she was across the threshold and the door closed behind her. She was smiling as though she felt herself to be up to some lark. "Hullo, Marko. Don't you hate me for coming in here like this?"

"It's jolly surprising."

"That's another way of saying it. Now if you'd said it was surprisingly jolly! Well, shake hands, Marko, and pretend you're glad."

He laughed and put out his hand. But she delayed response; she first slipped off the gauntlets she was wearing and then gave him her hand. "There!" she said.

"There!" It was as though she had now done something she much wanted to do; as one says "There!" on at last sitting down after much fatigue.

She tossed her gauntlets on to a chair. She walked past him toward the window. "You got my letter?"

"Yes."

Her face was averted. Her voice had not the bantering note with which she had spoken at her entry.

"You never answered it."

"Well, I'd just seen you—just before I got it."

She was looking out of the window. "Why haven't you been up?"

"Oh—I don't know. I was coming."

"Well, I *had* to come," she said.

He made no reply. He could think of none to make.

II

SHE turned sharply away from the window and came toward him, radiant again, as at her entry. And in her first bantering tone, "I know you hate it"—she smiled, resuming her first suggestion—"me coming here, like this. It makes you feel uncomfortable. You always feel uncomfortable when you see me, Marko. I'd like to know what you thought when they told you I was here——"

He made to speak.

She went on: "No, I wouldn't. I'd like to know just what you were doing before they told you. Tell me that, Marko."

"I believe I wasn't doing anything. Just thinking."

"Well, I like you best when you're thinking. You puzzle, don't you, Marko? You've got a funny old head. I believe you live in your old head, you know. Puzzling things. Clever beast! I wish I could live in mine." And she gave a note of laughter.

"Where do you live, Nona?"

"I don't live. I just go on"—she paused—"flotsam."

Strange word to use, strangely spoken!

It seemed to Sabre to drop with a strange, detached effect into the conversation between them. His habit of visualizing inanimate things caused him to see as it were a pool between them at their feet, and from the word dropped into it ripples that came to his feet upon his margin of the pool and to her feet upon hers.

III

HE TOOK the word away from its personal application: "I believe that's rather what I was thinking about when you came, Nona. About how we just go on—flotsam. Don't you know on a river where it's tidal, or on the seashore at the turn,

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the mass of stuff you see there, driftwood and spent foam and stuff, just floating there, uneasily, brought in and left there—from somewhere; and then presently the tide begins to take it and it's drawn off and moves away and goes—somewhere. Arrives and floats and goes. That's mysterious, Nona——"

She said swiftly, as though she were stirred: "Oh, Marko, yes, that's mysterious. Do you know sometimes I've seen drift like that and I've felt—oh, I don't know. But I've put out a stick and drawn in a piece of wood just as the stuff was moving off, just to save it being carried away into—well, into that you know."

"Have you, Nona?"

She answered: "Do you think that's what life is, Marko?"

"It's not unlike," he said. And he added, "Except about some one coming along with a stick and drawing a bit into safety. I'm not so sure about that. Perhaps that's what we're all looking for——"

He suddenly ralized that he was back precisely at the thoughts his mind had taken up on the morning he had met her. But with a degree more of illumination. Two feelings came into his mind, the second hard upon the other and overriding it, as a fierce horseman might catch and override one pursued. He said, "It's rather jolly to have some one that can see ideas like that." And then the overriding, and he said with astonishing roughness, "But you—you aren't flotsam! How can you be flotsam—the life you've—taken?"

And, lo, if he had struck her, and she been bound, defenceless, and with her eyes entreating not to be struck again, she could not deeper have entreated him than in the glance she fleeted from her eyes, the quiver of her lids that first released, then veiled it.

It stopped his words. It caught his throat.

IV

HE GOT up quickly. "I say, Nona, never mind about thinking. I'll tell you what's been doing. Rotten. Happened just after I met you the other day."

"The dust on these roads!" she said. She touched her eyes with her handkerchief. "What, Marko?"

"Well, old Fortune promised to take me into partnership about an age ago."

"Marko, he ought to have done it an age ago. What's there rotten about that?" Her voice and her air were as gay as when she had entered.

"The rotten thing is that he's turned it down. At least practically has. He—" He told her of the Twyning and Fortune incident. "Pretty rotten of old Fortune, don't you think?"

"Old fiend!" said Nona. "Old trout!"

Sabre laughed. "Good word, trout. The men here all say he's like a whale. They call him Jonah," and he told her why.

She laughed gaily. "Marko! How disgusting you are! But I'm sorry. I am. Poor old Marko. Of course, it doesn't matter a horse-radish what an old trout like that thinks about your work, but it does matter, doesn't it? I know how you feel. They had an author man at a place we were staying at the other day—Maurice Ash—and he told me that although he says it doesn't matter, and knows it doesn't matter, when an absolutely trivial person says something riling about any of his stuff, still it does matter. He said a thing you've produced out of yourself you can't bear to have slighted—not by the butcher. Gladys Occleve made us laugh. Maurice Ash said to her, 'It's like a mother's child. Look here, you're a countess,' he said to her, 'you oughtn't to mind what a butcher thinks of your children; but supposing the butcher said your infant Henry was a stupid little brat, what would you do?' Gladys said she'd dash a best-end-of-the-neck straight into his face."

Sabre laughed. "Yes, that's the feeling. But of course, all these books"—he indicated the shelves—"aren't mine, not my children; more like my adopted children."

She declared it was the same thing. "More so, in a way. You've invented them, haven't you, called them out of the vasty deep sort of thing and brought them up in the way they should go. I do think it's rather fine, Marko."

Sabre "worked back" from the cup through the events of the day, and through the events of the day returned to the cup.

She was at the shelves, scanning the books. Her fond, her almost tender sympathy, made him, too, feel that it was rather fine. Her light words in her high, clear tone, voiced exactly his feelings toward the books. Talking with her was, in the reception and return of his thoughts, nearer to reading a book that delighted him than to anything else with which he could compare it. There was the same interchange of ideas, not necessarily expressed; the same creation and play of fancy, imagined, not stated.

Her hands were moving about the volumes, pulling out a book here and there; she mused the titles. "'Greek Unseens—Prose'; 'Greek Unseens—Verse'; 'Latin Unseens — Verse.' Marvelous person, Marko! 'The Shell Algebra'; 'The Shell Latin Grammar'; 'The Shell English Literature'; 'The Shell Modern Geography.' That's a series, 'The Shell,' eh? I *do* call that a good idea. 'The Six Terms Chemistry'; 'The Six Terms Geology.'"

"Yes, that's another series," he said. He was standing beside her. Delightful this! His pride in his work thrilled anew. "You see the idea of the thing. Gives the boy the feeling of something definite to get through in a definite time."

SHE was reading one of the prefaces, signed with his initials. "Yes, that's ever so good. I see what you've written here, '. . . avoiding the formidable and unattractive wilderness that a new textbook commonly presents to the pupil's mind.' I call that jolly good, Marko. I call it all awfully good. Fancy you sitting in here and thinking out all those ideas. Or do you think them out at home? Do you talk them out with Mabel?"

He thought of Mabel's expression. "Those lesson-books." He lied. "Oh, yes. Pretty often."

"Show me which was the first one of all—the one you began with."

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He showed her. "Fancy!" She handled it. "How fearfully proud of it you must have been, Marko. And Mabel; wasn't she proud? The very first!" She called it "Dear thing" and returned it to its place with a little pat, as of affection.

He turned away: "Oh well, that's enough," he said.

V

SHE moved about the room touching things, looking at things.

"Show me something else. Is that where the old trout basks? Can he hear us? I am glad I've seen your room, Marko. I shall imagine you puzzling in here."

Touching things, looking at things. He thought the room would always look different—after this. He felt strangely disturbed. He could with difficulty reply to her. His mind threw back, in its habit, to some dim occasion when he had felt in some degree as he was feeling now. When? Certainly he had felt it before. When?

He remembered. It was a Saturday in the first month of his first term at Tidborough School when his father had come over to see him. The loneliness of newness was still upon him. He had been affected almost to tears by being with some one whose mind was open, as it were, for him to jump into: some one to whom he could open his mind, unseal the home thoughts, unlock the timid tongue. He had talked—how he had talked! He had felt bursting to talk; and only talking could ease the feeling; and how it had eased! Yes, this was the same again. He did not want her to go. He wanted to talk—how he wanted to talk!—to tell, unseal, unlock, expose.

He said, "I tell you what, Nona. I'll tell you something. I've an idea sometimes of cutting out from all this place and starting an educational publishing business on my own."

She was enormously interested. "Oh, Marko, if only you would!"

"Well, I think about it. I do. I can see a biggish thing in it. The Tidborough Press, I'd call it. Like the University Press, you know, Oxford and Cambridge. By Jove, it might go any distance, you know!"

"Oh, you must! You must!"

He began to pour out the tremendous and daring scheme.

VI

HE TALKED animatedly—these long pent-up enthusiasms— She attended rapt and gleaming-eyed, following him with most delicious "Yes—yes" and with little nods; and he suddenly became aware of how poignant to him was the sympathy of her interest—and stopped. Thus to pour out, thus to be heard, was to experience the exquisite pain that comes with sudden relief of intolerable pain, as when an anodyne steals through the veins of torture. He stopped. He could not bear it.

"Well, that's all," he said.

She declared, "It's splendid. How well you're doing, Marko. I knew you would." She paused. "Not that that matters," she said.

He asked her, "What do you mean—'not that that matters'?"

She made a little face at him. "Marko, you're not to snap me up like that. I've noticed it two or three times. I mean it doesn't matter what a man does. It's what he is that matters."

He laughed. "Well, that lets me down pretty badly if that's the estimate. I'm awful, you know."

She shook her head. "Oh, you're not so bad."

"You don't know me. I've been growing awful these years."

"Tell me how awful you are. Does Mabel think you're awful?"

"You ask her! I'm the most unsatisfactory sort of person it's possible to meet. Really."

"Go on; tell me, Marko. I like this."

"What, like hearing how unsatisfactory I am?"

"I like hearing you talk. You've got rather a nice voice—I used to tell you that, didn't I?—and I like hearing you stumbling about trying to explain your ideas. You've got ideas. You're rather an ideary person. Go on. Why are you unsatisfactory?"

How familiar her voice was on that note—caressing, drawing him on.

He said, "I'll tell you, Nona. I'm unsatisfactory because I've got the most infernal habit of seeing things from about twenty points of view instead of one. For other people, that's the most irritating thing you can possibly imagine. I've no convictions; that's the trouble. I swing about from side to side. I always can see the other side of a case, and you know, that's absolutely fatal——"

SHE said gently, "Fatal to what, Marko?"

He was going to say "To happiness"; but he looked at her and then looked away. "Well, to everything; to success. You can't possibly be successful if you haven't got convictions—what I call bald-headed convictions. That's what success is, Nona, the success of politicians and big men whose names are always in the papers. It's that: seeing a thing from only one point of view and going all out for it from that point of view. Convictions. Not mucking about all round a thing and seeing it from about twenty different sides like I do. You know, you can't possibly pull out this big booming sort of stuff they call success if you're going to see anybody's point of view but your own. You must have convictions. Yes, and narrower than that, not convictions but conviction. Only one conviction—that you're right and that every one who thinks differently from you is wrong to blazes." He laughed. "And I'm dashed if I ever *think* I'm right, let alone conviction of it. I can always see the bits of right on the other side of the argument. That's me. Dash me!"

She said, "Go on, Marko. I like this."

"Well, that's all there is to it, Nona. These conviction chaps, these booming politicians and honors-list chaps, these Bagshaw chaps—you know Bagshaw?—they go like a cannon-ball. They go like hell and smash through and stick when they get there. My sort's like the footballs you see down at the school puntabout. Wherever there's a punt I feel it and respond to it. My sort's out to be kicked—" He laughed again—"But I couldn't be any other sort."

She said, "I'm glad you couldn't be, Marko. You're just the same as you used to be. I'm glad you're the same."

He did not reply.

VII

SHE sat briskly forward in the big armchair in which she faced him, making of the motion a movement as though throwing aside a turn the conversation had taken. "Well, go on, Marko. Go on talking. I'm not going to let you stop talking yet. I love that about how people get success nowadays. It's jolly true. I never thought of it before. Yes, you're still a terribly thinky person, Marko. Go on. Think some more. Out loud."

Caressing—drawing him on—just as of old . . . .

He said thoughtfully, "I tell you a thing I often think a lot about, Nona. You being here like this puts it in my mind. Conventions."

She smiled teasingly. "Ah, poor Marko. I knew you'd simply hate it, my coming in like this. Does it seem terribly unconventional, improper, to you, shut up with me in your office?"

He shook his head. "It seems very nice. That's all it seems. But it does bring into my mind that you're the sort of person that doesn't think tuppence about what's usually done or what's not usually done; and that reminded me of things I've thought about conventions. Look here, Nona, this really is rather interesting——"

"Yes," she said. "Yes."

Just so he used to bring ideas to her; just so, with "Yes—yes" she used to receive them.

But he went on: "Why, convention, you know, it's the most mysterious, extraordinary thing. It's a code society has built up to protect itself and to govern itself, and when you go into it it's the most marvelous code that ever was invented. All sorts of things that the law doesn't give, and couldn't give, our conventions shove in on us in the most amazing way. And all probably originated by a lot of Mother Grundy-ish old women, that's what's so extraordinary. You know, if all the greatest legal minds of all the ages had laid themselves out to make a social code they could never have got anywhere near the rules the people have built up for themselves. And that's what I like, Nona—that's what I think so interesting and the best thing in life: the things the people do for themselves without any state interference. That's what I'd encourage all I knew if I were a politician——"

He broke off. "I say, aren't I the limit, gassing away like this? I hardly ever get off nowadays and when I do!—why don't you stop me?"

She made a little gesture deprecatory of his suggestion.

"Because I like to hear you. I like to watch your funny old face when you're on one of your ideas. It gets red underneath, Marko, and the red slowly comes up. Funny old face! Go on. I want to hear this because I'm going to disagree with you, I think. I think conventions, most of them, are odious, hateful, Marko. I hate them."

VIII

HE HAD been strangely affected by the words of her interruption: a contraction in the throat—a twitching about the eyes. But he was able, and glad

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And, lo, if he had struck her, and she been bound, defenseless, she could not deeper have entreated him than in the glance she fleeted from her eyes. It stopped his words. It caught his throat.

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that he was able, to catch eagerly at her opinion. "Yes, yes, I know, odious, hateful, and much more than that, cruel—conventions can be as cruel, as cruel as hell. I was just coming to that. But they're all absolutely rightly based, Nona. That's the baffling and the maddening part of them. That's what interests me in them. In their application they're often unutterably wrong, cruel, hideously cruel and unjust, but when you examine them, even at their cruelest, you can't help seeing that fundamentally they're absolutely right and reasonable and necessary.

"Look at all this stuff there's been in the papers lately about what they call the problem of the unmarried mother. Now there's a brute of a case for you: a girl gets into trouble and while she sticks to her baby she's made an outcast; every door is shut to her; her own people will have nothing to do with her; no one will take her in—so long as she's got the baby with her. That's convention and you can imagine cases where it's cruel beyond words. But it's no good cursing society about it. You can't help seeing that the convention is fundamentally right and essential. Where on earth would you be if girls with babies could find homes as easily as girls without babies?" He smiled. "You'd have babies pouring out all over the place. See it?"

She nodded. "I *do* think that's interesting, Marko. I think that's most awfully interesting. Yes, cruel and hateful and preposterous, many of them, but all fundamentally right. I think that's *absorbing*. I shall look out for conventions now, and when they annoy me most I'll think out what they're based on. I will!"

"Well, it's not a bad idea," he said. "It helps in all sorts of ways to think things out as they happen to you. You don't realize what a mysterious business life is till you begin to do that; and once you begin to feel the mysteriousness of it there's not much can upset you. You get the feeling that you're part of an enormous, mysterious game, and you just wonder what the last move means. Eh?"

She did not answer.

Presently she said, "Yes, you do still think things, Marko. You haven't changed a bit, you know. You're just the same."

He smiled. "Oh, well, it's only two years, you know—less than two years since you went away."

"I wasn't thinking of two years."

"How many years were you thinking of?"

"Ten."

They just sat there.

IX

THE insistent shrieking of a motor siren in the street below began to penetrate their silence. When it came to Sabre's consciousness he had somehow the feeling that it had been going on a very long time. He jumped to his feet. The siren had the obscene and terrific note of a gigantic hen in delirium. "What the devil's that?"

She received his question with the blank look of one whose mind had no idea of the question's reason. The strangled gurgle and shriek from without informed her in paroxysms of hideous sound. With a motion of her body, as of one shaking off dreams, she threw away the be-musement in which she had sat. She screwed up her face in torture. "Oh, *wow!* Isn't it too awful! That's Tony. In the car. I told him I'd look in here." She glanced at the clock. "Marko, it's one o'clock. I've been here two mortal hours!"

The gigantic hen screamed in delirious death agony.

"Oh, good heavens, that noise!" She stepped to the window and opened the casement. "Tony! That noise! Tony, for goodness' sake!"

An extravagantly long motor-car was drawn against the curb. Lord Tybar in a dustcoat and a sleek bowler hat of silver-gray, sat in the driver's seat. He was industriously and without cessation winding the handle of the siren. An uncommonly pretty woman sat beside him. She was massed in furs. In her ears she held the index-finger of each hand, her elbows sticking out on each side of her head. Thus severally occupied, she and Lord Tybar made an unusual picture and a not inconsiderable proportion of the youth and citizens of Tidborough stood round the front of the car and enjoyed the unusual picture that they made.

THE spectators looked up at Nona's call; Lord Tybar ceased winding the handle and looked up with his engaging smile; the uncommonly pretty woman removed her fingers from her ears and also turned upward her uncommonly pretty face.

"Hullo!" called Lord Tybar. "Did you happen to hear my sighs?"

"That appalling noise!" said Nona. "You ought to be prosecuted!"

"If you'd had it next to you!" piped the uncommonly pretty lady in an uncommonly pretty voice. "It's like a whole ship being seasick together."

"It's nothing of the kind," protested Lord Tybar. "It's the plaintive lament of a husband entreating his wife."

Sabre laughed. "I'll come down with you, Nona."

As they went down he asked her: "Who's that with him in the car?"

"One of his friends. Staying with us."

Something in her voice made it—afterward—occur to him as odd that she spoke of one of "his," not one of "our" friends, and did not mention her name.

"Well, the whole of Tidborough knows where you've been, Nona," Lord Tybar greeted them. "And a good place, too." He addressed the lady by his side. "Puggo, look at those pulpits and things in the window. You never go to church. It'll do you good. That's a pulpit, that tall thing. They preach from that."

The lady remarked: "Thanks. I can remember it. At least I was married in a church, you know."

"And, of course," said Nona, "you always remember you're married, don't you?"

Sabre glanced quickly at her. Her tone cut across the frivolous exchanges with an acid note. So utterly unlike Nona!

And the thing was real, not imagined; and went further. The uncommonly pretty woman addressed as Puggo replied, "Oh, always. And so do you, don't you, dear?" and her uncommonly pretty eyes went in a quick glance from Nona's face to Sabre's, where they hovered the fraction of a moment, and thence to Lord Tybar's where also they hovered, and smiled.

And Lord Tybar, his small, handsome [illegible] at me. Not that. No, it wasn't. Not head slightly on one side, looked from one to another with precisely that mock in his glance that Sabre had noticed, and transiently wondered at, on the day he had met them riding.

Funny!

"But, Puggo, you don't know Sabre, do you?" Lord Tybar said. "Sabre, this is Mrs. Winfred. A woman of mystery. One mystery is how she ever won Fred and the other why she is called Puggo. There must be something pretty dark in her past to have got her a name like Puggo."

The woman of mystery shrugged her shoulders. "Of course Tony's simply a fool," she observed. "You know that, don't you, Mr. Sabre?"

"It's not her face," Lord Tybar continued. "You might think it's her figure the way she hides it up under all those furs on a day like this. But a pug's figure——"

Nona broke in. "I suppose we're going to start some time?"

"Will you come and sit here," Puggo inquired, but without making any movement.

"No, I'll sit behind."

She got in. "Good-by, Marko." Her voice sounded tired. She gave Sabre her hand. "Jolly, the books," she said. "And our talk."

"Now throw yourself in front, any boy who wants to be killed!" Lord Tybar called to the idlers. "No corpses to-day?" He let in the clutch. "Good-by, Sabre. Good-by, good-by." He waved his hand airily. The big car slid importantly up the street.

Sabre watched them pass out of sight.

As the car turned out of The Precincts into High Street—a nasty corner—Lord Tybar, alone of the three, one hand on the steering wheel, half turned in his seat and twirled the silver-gray bowler in gay farewell.

Or mockery?

X

THROUGH the day Sabre's thoughts, as a man sorting through many documents and coming upon and retaining one, fined down toward a picture of himself alone with Nona—alone with her, watching her beautiful face—and saying to her: "Look here, there were three things you said, three expressions you used. Explain them, Nona."

Fined down toward this picture, sifting the documents.

He thought: "Tybar—Tybar—They're just alike in their way of saying things, Nona and Tybar. That bantering way they talk when they're together—when they're together. Tybar does whoever he's with. Not Nona. Not with me. But with Tybar. She plays up to him when they're together. And he plays up to her. Everybody says how amusing they are. They're perfectly suited. They look so dashed handsome, the pair of them. And always that bantering, airy way of theirs together. That's just characteristic of the oneness of their characters. I couldn't put up that bantering sort of stuff. I never could. I'm a jolly sight too serious. And Nona knew it. She used to laugh at me about it. She still does. 'You puzzle, don't you, Marko?' she said this very morning."

He thought, "No, that wasn't laughing

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that—nor any of it. What did she mean when she said 'There!' like that when she gave me her hand when she first came in? And took off her glove first. What did she mean when she said she had to come? 'Well, I *had* to come,' she said. What did she mean when she said she was flotsam? *Flotsam!* Why? Made me angry in my voice when I asked her. I said 'How can you be flotsam?' And how the devil can she? Nona, with Tybar, flotsam? But she said it. I said, 'How can you be flotsam, the life you've—taken?' I didn't mean to say 'taken' like that. I meant to have said, 'the life you've got, you live.' But I meant taken, chosen. She did take it, deliberately. She chose between us. I might almost have heard her choose 'Marko or Tybar? Oh, dash it—Tybar.' I never reproached her, not by a look. I saw her point of view. My infernal failing, even then. Not by a look I ever reproached her. I thought I'd forgotten it, absolutely. But I haven't. It came out in that moment that I haven't. 'The life you've—taken.' I meant it to sting. Damn me, it did sting. That look she gave! As if I had struck her. What rot! How could it sting her? How could she mind? Only if she regretted. Is it *likely?*"

HE THOUGHT, "But *is* she happy? Is it all what it appears between them? That remark she made to that woman and the extraordinary way she said it. 'You never forget you're married, do you?' Amazing thing to say, the way she said it. What did she mean? And that woman. She said something like 'Nor you, do you?' and looked at me and then at Tybar. And Tybar looked—at Nona, at me, as if he'd got some joke, some mock."

He thought: "What rot! She chose. She knew he was her sort. She knew I wasn't. She chose deliberately."

Clearly, as it were yesterday, he remembered the day she had declared to him her choice. In the cathedral cloisters. Walking together. And suddenly, in the midst of indifferent things, she told him, "I say, Marko, I'm going to marry Lord Tybar."

And his reply, the model of indifference. "Are you, Nona?"

Nothing else said of it between them. There would certainly have been more discussion if she had said she was going to buy a packet of hairpins. And his thought had immediately been, not this nor that nor the other of a hundred thoughts proper to a blow so stunning, but merely and immediately and precisely that he would tell his father Yes to what that very morning he had told him No—that he would go into the Fortune, East & Sabre business. Extraordinary effect from such a cause! Grotesque. Paradoxical. Going into Fortune, East & Sabre meant "settling down"; marriage conventionally involved settling down; yet, while he had visioned marriage with Nona, settling down had been the last thing in the world to think of—because he projected marriage with Nona he had that very morning rejected settling down. He was not to marry her—therefore, yes, he would settle down. Amazing. He had not realized how amazing till now.

And catastrophic. Not till now had he realized to what catastrophe he then had plunged. He thought: "The fact was Nona touched things in me that helped me. Without her I just shut down. I just go about longing, longing, and all shut up—day after day, year after year—all shut up. And now there's this—she's come back like this."

He came upon the picture of himself alone with Nona—alone with her—watching her beautiful face—and saying to her "Look here, there were three things you said, three expressions you used. Explain them, Nona. Explain 'There!', with your glove off. Explain 'Flotsam.' Explain 'Well, I had to come.' Explain them, Nona—for God's sake."

Chapter Ten

Low Jinks Knocks Her Knee

BUT it was October before he asked her to explain them. The Tybars, as he learned when next he met her, a week after her visit to the office, were only at Northrepps for a breathing space after their foreign tour. Through the summer they were going the usual social round, ending in Scotland. Back in October for the shooting, and wintering there through the hunting season.

So she told him; and he thought while she was speaking: "All right. I'll accept that. That helps to stop me asking her. If an opportunity occurs before she goes, I'll ask her. I must. But if it doesn't occur I'll accept that. I won't make an opportunity."

It did not occur, and he abode by his resolution. He met her once or twice, always in other company. And she was always then particularly gay, particularly airy, particularly bantering. But answering her banter he once caught an expression behind her airiness. He thought: "It is a shield"; and he turned away abruptly from her. He could not bear it.

This was on the occasion of a little dinner-party at Northrepps to which he had come with Mabel, a neighbor, Major Millet, whose chief remark was always "Ri-te *O!*," and one or two others among the guests. Major Millet was walking back, but Mabel invited him to accompany them in the ancient village fly. "Ri-te *O!*" said Major Millet with enormous enthusiasm.

Nona came with them to the door on their departure. Sabre was last down the steps. "Well, I shan't see you again till October," she said.

"No, till October." He no more than touched her hand and turned away. He had kept his resolution.

She was close behind him. He heard her give the tiniest little catch at her breath. She said, "Shall I write to you, Marko?"

He turned toward her. She was smiling as though it was a chaffing remark she had made.

Her shield . . .

And he answered her from behind his own shield: "Oh, well, I'm bad at letters, you know."

But their eyes met with no shields before them; and she was wounded, for he just caught her voice as he went down the steps: "Oh, Marko, do write to me!"

The Ri-te *O!* voice of the major: "Come on, Sabre, my boy! Come on! Come on!"

He got into the cab. Major Millet had taken the seat next Mabel. "Ri-te *O*, cabby!"

His thoughts were: "That's a fourth question: Why did you say 'Oh, Marko, do write to me'? Or was that the answer to the other questions, although I never asked them? . . ."

II

HE DID not write to her. But in October a ridiculous incident impelled afresh the urgent desire to ask her the questions: an incident no less absurd than the fact that in October Low Jinks knocked her knee.

Mabel spent most of the summer on visits to friends. It was late September when they resumed life together at Penny Green. In their absence the light railway linking up the Garden Home with Tidborough and Chovensbury had been opened with enormous excitement and celebration; and Mabel became at once immersed in paying calls and joining the activities of the new and intensely active community.

Then Low Jinks knocked her knee.

The knee swelled and for two days Low Jinks had to keep her leg on a chair. It greatly annoyed Mabel to see Low Jinks sitting in the kitchen with her leg "stuck out on a chair." She told Sabre it was extraordinary how "that class of person" always got in such a horrible state from the most ridiculous trifles. "I suppose I knock my knee a dozen times a week, but my knee doesn't swell up and get disgusting. You're always reading in the paper about common people getting stung by wasps, or getting a scratch from a nail, and dying the next day. They must be in a horrible state. It always makes me feel quite sick."

Sabre laughed. "Well, I expect poor old Low Jinks feels pretty sick, too."

"She enjoys it."

"What, sitting there with a knee like a muffin? I had a look at her just now. Don't you think she might have one of those magazines to read? She looks pretty sorry for herself."

Signs of "flying up." "You haven't given her a magazine, have you?"

"No—I haven't. But I told her I would after dinner."

"If you don't mind, you won't. Sarah has plenty to occupy her time. She can perfectly well clean the silver and things like that, and she has her sewing. She has upset the house quite enough with her leg stuck out on a chair all day without reading magazines."

And then in the extraordinary way in which discussions between them were suddenly lifted by Mabel on to unsuspected grievances against him, Sabre suddenly found himself confronted with: "You know how she hurt her knee, I suppose?"

He knew the tone. "No. My fault, was it?"

"Yes. As it happens it was your fault—to do with you."

"Good Lord! However did I manage to hurt Low Jinks's knee?"

"She did it bringing in your bicycle."

He thought: "Now what on earth is this leading up to?" During the weeks of his separation from Mabel, thinking often of Nona, he had caused himself to think from her to Mabel. His reasoning and reasonable habit of mind had made him, finding extraordinary rest in thought of Nona, accusing himself for finding none in thought of Mabel. She was his wife—he never could get away from the poignancy of that phrase. His wife—his responsibility toward her—the old thought, nine years

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old, of all she had given up in exchanging her own life for his life—and what was she getting? He set himself, on their reunion, always to remember the advantage he had over her: that he *could* reason out her attitude toward things; that she could not—neither his attitude nor, what was more, her own.

Now. What was this leading up to? "She did it bringing in your bicycle."

Bantering protest sometimes averted a disaster. "Well, come now, Mabel, that's not my fault. That was your idea, making Low Jinks come out and meet me every evening as if the old bike was a foam-flecked steed. Wasn't it now?"

"Yes, but not in the dark."

Mysterious maneuvering! But he felt he was approaching the edge. "In the dark?"

"Yes, not in the dark. What I mean is, I really can not imagine why you must keep up your riding all through the winter. It was different when there was no other way. Now the railway is running, I simply can not imagine why you don't use it."

"Well, that's easy—because I like the ride."

"You can't possibly like riding back on these pitch-dark nights, cold and often wet. That's absurd."

"Well, I like it a jolly sight better than fugging up in those carriages with all that gassing crowd of Garden Home fussers."

"That's just it!" Mabel said; and he thought, "Ah!"

"That's just it. And of course you laugh. Why you can't be friendly with people like other men, I never can imagine. There're heaps of the nicest people up at the Garden Home, but from the first you've set yourself against them. Why, you never like to make friends like other people!"

He did not answer.

They were at dinner. She made an elaborate business of reaching for the salt. "If you ask me, it's because you don't think they're good enough for you."

He thought: "That's to rouse me. I'm dashed if I'm going to be roused." He thought, "It's getting the devil, this. There's never a subject we start but we work up to something like this. We work on one another like acid on acid. In a minute she'll have another go at it, and then I shall fly off, and then there we'll be. It's getting the devil, this. But I'm dashed if I'll fly off. It's up to me."

And then she began.

SHE resumed precisely at the point she had left off. While his mind had journeyed in review all round and about the relations between them, her mind had remained cumberously at the thought of her last words. There, he told himself, was the whole difference between them. He was intellectually infinitely more agile (he did not put it higher than that) than she. She could not get away from things as he could. They remained in her mind and rankled there. To get impatient with her, to proceed from impatience to loss of temper, was flatly as cruel as to permit impatience and anger with one bedridden and therefore unable to join in robust exercises. He thought, "I'll not do it."

She said, actually repeating her last words, "Yes, if you ask me, it's because you don't think they're good enough for you. As it happens, there're all sorts of particularly nice men up there, only you never take the trouble to know them. And clever—the only thing you pretend to judge by; though what you can find clever in Mr. Fargus or those Perches goodness only knows. There're all sorts of societies and circles and meetings up there that I should have thought were just what would have attracted you. But, no. You prefer that pottering Mr. Fargus with his childish riddles, and even that young Perch without spirit enough to go half a yard without that everlasting old mother of his —"

It was longer, and fiercer, than he had expected. He interposed: "I say, Mabel, what's the point of all this, exactly?"

"The point is that it makes it rather hard for me, the way you go on. I've made many, many friends up at the Garden Home. Do you suppose it doesn't seem funny to them that my husband is never to be seen, never comes near the place, never meets their husbands? Of course they must think it funny. I know I feel it very awkward."

He thought: "Girding! Sneering! Can't I get out of this?" He thought, "Dash it, man, it's only just her way. What *is* there in it?" He said, "Yes, but look here, Mabel, we started at my riding home in the dark or rather at old Low Jinks's muffin knee. Let's work out the trouble about that."

"That's what I'm talking about. I think it's extraordinary of you to go riding by yourself all through the winter just to avoid people I'd like you to be friendly with. I ask you not to and you call it 'fugging up in railway carriages with them.'

He heard her give the tiniest little catch at her breath. She said, "Shall I write to you, Marko?"

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That was the elegant expression you used."

"Elegant"—that was the word Nona had said she was going to have for her own.

He sat up in his chair. He was glad he had kept his mind detached all through this business. He was going to make an effort.

He said, "Well, listen, Mabel. I'll explain. This is me explaining. Behind this fork. I see what you mean. Perfectly well. I'm sorry. I'm absolutely rotten at meeting new people. I always have been. I never seem to have any conversation. They always think I'm just a fool—which as a matter of fact I always feel in a crowd. But apart from that, you've no idea how much I enjoy the bike ride. I wouldn't give it up for anything. I've tried to explain to you sometimes. It gets me away from things, and I like getting away from things. I feel—it's hard to explain a stupid thing like this—I feel as if I were lifted out of things and able to look at things from a sort of other world point of view. It's jolly. Don't you remember I suggested to you, oh, years ago, when we were first—when we first came here, suggested you might ride in part of the way with me of a morning, and told you the idea of the thing? You didn't quite understand it——"

She pushed back her chair. "I don't understand it now," she said.

His eyes had been shining as they shone when he was interested or eager. He threw himself back in his seat. "Oh, well!"

She got up. She said in a very loud, very thin and edged voice, the little constrictions on either side of her nose extraordinarily deep:

"I never can understand any of your ideas, except that no one else ever seems to have them. Except your Fargus friends perhaps. I should keep them for them if I were you. Anyway, all I wanted to say I've said. All I wanted to say was that, if you persist in riding home in the dark, I really can not allow Sarah to go out and bring in your bicycle. After this leg of hers is over, if it ever is over, I really can not allow it any more. That's all I wanted to say."

She left the room.

He began to fumble with extraordinary intensity in the pockets of his dinner-jacket for his cigaret-case. He could feel it, but his fingers seemed all thumbs. He got it out and it slipped through his fingers on to the table. His hands were shaking.

Chapter Eleven

Flotsam

A DRAPER occupied the premises opposite Fortune, East & Sabre's. On the following afternoon, just before five o'clock, Sabre saw Nona alight from her car and go into the draper's. He put on his hat and coat and descended into the street. As he crossed the road she came out.

"Hullo, Marko!"

"Hullo. Well, there's evidently one woman in the world who can get out of a draper's in under an hour. You haven't been in a minute."

"Did you see me go in? As a matter of fact, I didn't want anything. As a matter of fact, I was making up my mind——"

"Whether to come in and see me?"

She nodded.

"What about having some tea somewhere?"

"I think that's a good idea."

He suggested the Cloister Tea-Rooms. She spoke to the chauffeur and accompanied him.

II

THE Cloister Tea-Rooms were above a pastry-cook's on the first floor of one of the old houses in The Precincts. The irregularly shaped room provided several secluded tables, and they took one in a remote corner. But their conversation would have suffered nothing in a more central and neighbored situation. Nona began some account of her summer visitations. Sabre spoke a little of local businesses: had she seen the new railway? Had she been round the Garden Home since her return? But the subjects were but skirmishers thrown out before dense armies of thoughts that massed behind: met, and trifled, and rode away. When pretense of dragging out the meal could no longer be maintained, Nona looked at her watch. "Well, I must be getting back. We haven't had a particularly enormous tea, but the chauffeur's had none."

Sabre said, "Yes, let's get out of this." It was as though the thing had been a strain.

He put her into the car. She was so very, very quiet. He said, "I've half a mind to drive up with you. I'd like the ride, and a walk back."

She said the car could run him back, or take him straight over to Penny Green. "Yes, come along up, Marko. They have rather fun in the billiard-room after tea."

He got in and she shared him the heavy fur rug. "Not that I want fun in the billiard-room," he said.

She asked him lightly, "Pray, what can we provide for you, then?"

"I just want to drive up with you."

III

IT WAS only three miles to Northrepps. It seemed to Sabre an incredibly short time before a turn in the road fronted them with the park gates. And they had not spoken a word! He said, "By Jove, this car travels! I'll get down at the gates, Nona. I'm not coming in. I want the walk back."

She made no attempt to dissuade him. She leaned forward and called to the chauffeur; but as the car began to slow down she gave a little catch of emotion and said, "Well, we have had a chatty drive. You'd better change your mind and come along up, Marko."

He disengaged the rug from about him. "No, I think I'll get out here." He turned toward her. "Look here, Nona. Get out here and walk up." He echoed the little sound of feeling she had given, pretended laughter: "It will do you good after that enormous tea."

She said something about the tea being too enormous for exertion.

The car drew up. He got out and turned to her. "Look here. Please, do."

He saw the color fade away upon her face. "What for?"

"To talk." It was all he could say.

She put away the rug and gave him her hand. Warm, and she said "How dreadfully cold your hand is! Go on and get your tea, Jeffries. I'm going to walk up."

The man touched his cap. The car slid away and left them.

IV

THEY were within the gates. It had been a dull day. Evening stood mistily far up the long avenue of the drive and in the distances about the park on either hand. Among October's massing leaves, a small disquiet stirred. The leaves banked orderly between their parent trunks. Sabre noticed as a curious thing how, when they stirred, they only trembled in their massed formations, not broke their ranks, as if some live thing ran beneath them.

He said: "Do you know what this seems to me? It seems as though it was only yesterday, or this morning, that you came to see me at the office and we talked. Well, I want it to be only yesterday. I want to go on from there."

She said "Yes."

He hardly could hear the word. He looked at her. She was as tall as he. Not least of the contributions to her beauty in his eyes was the slim grace of her stature. But her face was averted; and he wanted most terribly to see her face. "Stand a minute and look at me, Nona." He touched her arm. "I want to see your face."

She turned toward him and raised her eyes to his eyes. "Oh, what is it you want to say, Marko?"

There was that which glistened upon her lower lids; and about her mouth were trembling movements; and in her throat a pulse beating.

He said: "It's you I want to say something. I want you to explain some things. Some things you said. Nona, when you came into my room that day and shook hands you said 'There!' when you gave me your hand. You took off your glove and said 'There!' I want to know why you said 'There!' And you said 'Well, I had to come.' And you said you were 'Flotsam.' And that night—when we'd been up to you—you said 'Oh, Marko, do write to me!' I want you to explain what you meant."

She said, "Oh, how can you remember?"

He answered, "Because I remember, you must explain."

"Please let me sit down, Marko." She faltered a little laugh. "I can explain better sitting down."

A felled trunk had been placed against the trees, facing toward the parkland. They went to it and he sat beside her. She sat upright but bending forward a little over her crossed knees, her hands clasped on them, looking before her across the park.

"No, you must look at me," he said.

She very slowly turned her body toward him. He thought her most beautiful; and the expression of her beautiful face was most terrible to him in all his emotions.

V

SHE spoke very slowly; almost with a perceptible pause between each word. She said, "Well, I'll tell you. I said Flotsam, didn't I? If I explain that. You know what flotsam is, Marko. Have you ever looked it up in the dictionary? The dictionary says it terribly. 'Goods shipwrecked and found floating on the sea.' I'm twenty-nine, Marko. I suppose that's

(Continued on page 65)

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"It Can Be Done!"

The Story of a Newspaper Business Battle

By Dorothy Llewellyn Field

ADVERTISING! Wizard of America, who showers upon a shuddering continent an endless stream of hair-tonics, violinists, motors and patent medicines; who turns Bourbon into buttermilk, corkscrews into bankbooks, substitutes "May I not?" for the Big Stick—mighty, illusive, all-pervading—Advertising!

Had Elliot King been a long-haired, blankety-blank versifier, he undoubtedly would have apostrophized his chosen goddess just like that. Being instead a hard-headed business man, he contented himself with serving her early and late by digging up advertising contracts; and he dug so well that at thirty-three years of age he was sitting in the private office of none other than Mortimer Welles, while that irritable magnate offered him a prize in the world of print-paper that would have turned many an older head.

Yes; King believed in advertising, but condensed his belief into the slogan, "*It Can Be Done;*" and now, when Welles was through speaking, he leaned forward and said earnestly:

"I know only one thing for certain about advertising, Mr. Welles, and that is, it pays! The *Signal* carries a whale of a lot of advertising; therefore it should pay. If things are as wobbly down there in Big City as you think, it may be a hard proposition; but I'll be glad to tackle it."

Welles was a self-centered, rheumatic man, spending his time chiefly between French Lick, where he soaked the inflammation out of his joints, and New York, where he gathered up a fresh supply. He owned, among other things, the Big City *Signal*, which had been his first newspaper enterprise in the days when he and Peckham Jones had started out to lick the world. Welles was a good scrapper, and when, rapidly increasing his interests, he pulled out of the active management of the *Signal*, he left Jones in charge, failing to see that the old man still clung to methods long since obsolete.

NOW, the *Signal* was steadily producing less revenue, although it was the second largest paper in Big City and had a tremendous "vogue" among that class of people who wouldn't have known what the word meant; and therefore he had fired three advertising managers in four years, and finally sent for King.

"I don't get it!" he said querulously. "Paper grows bigger all time; should pay; don't. You got ideas. Old wheel-horses ahead of you didn't do a thing but fight with Jones. Can't have old Jones bothered; grew up with him. He knows conditions; used to run whole paper; give you lots of help. Go ahead, work with Jones; see what's trouble; fix 'er up. Give you six months to look around. If can't show results, try somebody else; if can, take you on at ten thousand to start. What say?"

What King said resulted in his shrieking toward Big City on an excess-fare train one December night, full of plans and exuberance. He took over his new job without any fuss at all the moment he stepped into his trim, beautifully furnished office and surveyed it with approval. He surveyed, too, the superlative secretary who had held her job through the previous managerial dynasties, and he noted, also with approval, that she matched the pleasant attributes of the office perfectly. Whereupon he sat down at his polished desk, stretched out his long legs—Miss Mulroy had never seen such long legs—and remarked casually:

"Do you object to swearing?"

MISS MULROY'S Irish-blue eyes twinkled, and her mouth showed an unexpected and fugitive dimple. "I charge four dollars a week extra for swearing," she observed with a gravity belied by twinkling eyes.

King's lips twitched. "I don't mean a thing by it; but I do it in moments of—er—strain and stress," he explained. "Add it to whatever you're getting; don't thank me! I'll get my money's worth!"

The slim secretary's dimple deepened. "All right," she said calmly, and picked up a note-book. "What can I do for you?"

King considered. "Well, aside from the usual stunts, I'll want figures; lots of 'em. Right now, for instance, I want our advertising rates, and our income for the past six months, and the total advertising lineage we carried for the same period. How soon can I have 'em?"

"Right this minute," she said, extracting a tabulated statement from her desk-drawer. "All that was in Mr. Quimby's report when he left yesterday."

"Didn't wait to talk things over with me, eh?" asked King absently, taking the sheets and figuring on the margin with a pencil. "Funny thing!"

"Mr. Quimby was—rather indignant at Mr. Jones," explained the secretary. "Said he'd let him do his own initiating—nothing he could do would help you, anyhow."

"Um. Wonder why? Eight and six—goes seven times—see here, miss, your figures are wrong!"

"Why, they aren't either!" Then, confusedly, "What's the matter?"

"Look here," said King, indicating his marginal notes. "I've averaged our income against the lineage, to find the average rate; which ought to be twenty-eight cents. According to this rate-card we charge from twenty-five cents a line up to forty, depending on the size of the contract. But according to this report, it's rather less than fifteen cents!"

The girl knit her brows. "Why—that's funny! But I know my additions are correct. The only possible error would be if the bookkeeper furnished me with the wrong figure on income."

King thumped his desk, and she jumped. "You must verify anything you bring me!" he stated crisply. "I can't waste time checking errors. Get these corrected, and never bring me a damn thing that isn't absolutely O. K."

Miss Mulroy bit her lip; thought of the four dollars, and suppressed the words that crowded for utterance. "Oh, very well," she said icily, and withered him with a glance; but no—he refused to wither! Well, she didn't mind swearing, but if he was going to be so darn persnicketty—she'd quit! Permitting her outraged back to convey her feelings, she took up the desk telephone and asked the bookkeeper for verification of his figures; then turned to King, her eyes snapping.

"He gives me the same amount, so the average really *is* fifteen cents!"

"It isn't possible," said King calmly, "if the minimum rate we charge is twenty-five."

"But it's true!" she said with asperity. "I took the figures; I added them correctly; if the result isn't what you expect, you can't blame me! You'll have to look for the trouble elsewhere!"

KING smiled genially at her black hair. "Now, look here—don't get sore! Let me suggest that if things like this come up, you can save me a lot of time by going after 'em yourself! The more time you save me, the more valuable you become; think it over! Take a letter, please." She snatched her pad. "Peabody, this address," and he tossed a letter toward her: "'My dear Mr. Peabody: Why don't you give us your schedule for Everlastic Gum? I notice the *Bugle* carries it. Got anything against the *Signal?* I'm sure that a bigger percentage of our readers chew gum than those of the high-toned *Bugle*, and our employees are one hundred per cent. perfect! Give us a chaw at it. Yours very truly.'" Another, Jackson Vogleman, that place up in Michigan where they cure you of the willies—" 'Dear Jack: I notice in the paper you have just been made advertising manager of the Flaked Oats Company. My God, what a jump! Believe me, Jack——'"

"W—what did you say?" quavered Miss Mulroy.

"What? Oh—that 'My God!' business. Use your discretion on stuff like that. 'My'—er—'Good Heavens, what a jump!

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Last I saw of you, you were peddling your hay over the Southern territory by the bale. Honest, Jack, did you ever *eat* any of the stuff? I bet lots of our readers would like to try it. They'll try anything once. Why not tell 'em about it? The paper reaches 'em every day, you know!' Enclose a rate-card with that; and that's all for now. I'm going in to see Mr. Jones." And he left the office.

A very dazed young woman stared after him, looked at her chaotic notes, gazed at the ceiling and laughed.

"In five minutes that man's stirred up more excitement around here than old Quimby did in the eight months they let him dodder!" she reflected. Then she surveyed her trim feet whimsically. "Is it really true? Have you stepped into a responsible position? Do you really have a boss who expects you to use your head, Molly Mulroy? That man's worth thinking for! Now, why should that rate average fifteen cents? Get busy, M. Mulroy; get busy!"

Meanwhile King entered the sanctum of the publisher, and Jones greeted him sourly. He regarded King, and those before him, as interlopers, since they were responsible for his losing the complete authority which under the early régime, before advertising became a twin-sister to news, he had enjoyed. He felt the loss of his prestige bitterly, and worked craftily to show Welles that an advertising manager was a useless incumbrance. Which explains much that went on in the office of the *Signal*. He opened a mouth like a puckered tobacco-pouch and permitted his words to slip grudgingly out:

"Hum—glad to see you, Mr. King. Mr. Welles has—er—prepared us for you. Coming events cast their shadows before. Mr. Quimby would not wait; hasty man, Mr. Quimby. But I can put things as concretely as he, and I would suggest that you take things quietly for a month or so, until you are familiar with our problems. I'll help you, of course."

"Thanks," said King heartily. "I started in this morning with a couple of letters to men I knew."

"Well—that's good, of course; but your chief concern will be to renew the department-store contracts the first of April. They all expire then, and you know that department-store advertising is the backbone of every newspaper." King nodded. "That gives you four months to look about in and get acquainted. Take your time; haste makes waste."

"I CAN'T afford to take too much!" laughed King. "I've got to show progress before June first, you know." The shrewd little eyes narrowed. "What seems to be the chief trouble here, anyway?"

"Fighting and lack of cooperation!" said Jones dryly. "Now, I shall assist you in every way, and since I used to be in charge of your department as well as my own, you can safely leave things to me until you are ready to take them over. Look before you leap, get your bearings; and, in a month or so, start after the stores."

King was dissatisfied. "Well, I've got to see what's the best line of attack. As I understand it, the *Bugle* is the only paper which competes with us. Slightly larger circulation, and goes in general to a better class of homes. But I've got dope on the spending-power of the laboring man—our man, Mr. Jones—that'll make 'em all sit up! I'll want to send some advertising along those lines to every agency in the country, and every firm on our mailing-list!"

"But the expense!" protested Jones, paling.

"Well, you've got to put money into a building before you can use it," said King. "And if we don't believe in advertising ourselves, how can we expect others to believe in it? I'll have some copy for you to O. K. next week."

HE ROSE, bowed and left. Jones scowled at his retreating back. King sent Miss Mulroy out to lunch and followed her half an hour later. The girl came back at one and spent the next three hours among the old records; but when King returned at four-thirty his first attention was to the afternoon mail, and while he was still dictating, a knock on the door heralded the appearance of a dapper little man, who advanced with assurance and sank gracefully into the chair King motioned him to.

"You the boss? I'm Mossberg, of the Patent Drug Company. Can't deal with your solicitors; want something special. Contract for about twenty thousand lines; forty, if you make the price right."

King took a rate-card from his desk, ringed a figure with blue pencil, and tendered it to the suave little man, who waved it aside with an eloquent lemon-yellow glove.

"Oh, I've seen that before! I want a real price, Mr. King. Now, you've marked here a rate of thirty-five cents a line; that's too high, too high! Give me your best price; and we can close up in ten minutes."

King straightened. "Well, it won't take more than two! The rate on that card is thirty-five cents; and that's final."

Mossberg smiled forgivingly. "Nine minutes left! You put up a good bluff, Mr. King; but I assure you——"

"And I assure you that that is our only rate!"

Mossberg was frankly astonished. "Why, it's the usual thing!" he cried. "I got a contract last year for twenty-six cents; these adjustments are quite understood."

"Well, I don't understand them," said King. "What other newspapers do needn't affect us!"

"Oh, well, of course if you take that line!" said the little man rising. "I can always use the *Bugle!*"

"I'd be sorry for that, but you have our rate," said King.

"You might change your mind?" insinuated Mossberg. "Say—thirty? No? Well, I'll drop in later, in case you reconsider." And with this parting shot he stepped jauntily out.

King, with a laugh, flung open a window. "Consider the lilies of the field! Where does he get that idea, anyhow?"

The secretary breathed rapidly. "Well, he was quite within his rights, as he saw them," she explained. "I—I looked things up this afternoon, and found out that the *Signal* had been making these adjustments right along."

"What?" cried King, and whirled about.

"That's why your average was only fifteen! The department-stores are only paying from twelve to eighteen cents a line, this minute! And the little fellows pay just what they have to, no more!"

"Then—then our rate-card doesn't mean a damn thing?"

"Not a thing! We haven't gone by it for as far back as I had time to look—two or three years, anyhow!"

King drove his hands into his trousers pockets violently. "Let me have those figures again! I'm going in to see Jones. My God!" And he strode out as one brushing tigers from his path, leaving his slim secretary starry-eyed. He erupted into the office of the publisher just as that fussy individual, having wound himself up in a woolen muffler, was preparing to leave; but he collapsed into his chair at the sight of his advertising-manager's jaw.

"Look here, Mr. Jones! I've just found out why this paper pays so little! The rate-card is a swindle! No two advertisers pay the same rate! Nobody gets a square deal! Where did this thing start?"

"Oh, come, come," said Jones, nervously twiddling his feet. "What they don't know won't hurt them! If the Monarch will pay sixteen, and we can only hold Bergstrom up for twelve, why should we let the Monarch off with twelve, too?"

"Why? Why? Damnation, Mr. Jones, you tell me you don't see *why?* Good God! We might as well be pawnbrokers, haggling over a stickpin! How can anybody be expected to give us a square deal, if we swindle them right and left? How can we judge a salesman's ability, when he can bring in unlimited space by cutting the price? How—how—oh, my good Lord!"

He broke off in sheer unbelief; and Jones said smoothly:

"OH, WELL—go easy! Least said, soonest mended! Don't go off half-cocked without knowing the circumstances! There is really nothing we can do. About four or five years ago we lost the Bonton advertising schedule—biggest we have—at the twenty-five-cent rate; they claimed we didn't reach the class of homes they cater to. Beals let 'em have it at twenty-two rather than lose the contract. Well, it leaked out, and the rest wanted a cut, and so it went on; here a little, there a little, until now you see how it is! The best thing to do is to wait until April and try to boost the stores a little. Nothing radical, of course; a couple of cents a line will make quite a showing, quite a showing. Bergstrom, for instance, ought to pay sixteen instead of the twelve-cent rate."

"He'll pay the regular rate!" exploded King, who had sat speechless this far. "If they used to pay twenty-five cents four years ago, when our circulation wasn't nearly what it is now, they certainly can pay it when they renew in April!"

"They're too used to the rebate," said Jones. "It's too big a jump. You try it, and you'll very likely lose them all. A bird in the hand is worth two, you know——"

"A bird in the hand gathers no moss, either!" snorted King, "and it's lack of moss that queered my predecessors! Now, see here: the advertising rates are really my province, not yours; so I don't see that I have to go by your option in the matter. I *know* it can be done; and I'm going to do it!"

"I don't believe you can," said Jones stubbornly. "But try it, if you like."

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"Well, there's another aspect you haven't considered," said King, rising. "We aren't giving a square deal; and I don't intend to work behind any such thimble-rigging policy. I'm going after this thing right."

"Well, of course you're boss of your department," said Jones tartly, "but I'm not going to O. K. large expenditures for such an advertising campaign as you outlined this morning until I see where you're coming out."

King, too disgusted to answer, nodded and left the office abruptly, and for twenty strides his brow was deeply furrowed; then suddenly he laughed.

"The old cootie! I wonder what's on his mind. Any fool can see that the present policy is no good. That accumulation of proverbs has given him brain fog! Damned if I let him get my goat, though." And, entering his office, he asked Miss Mulroy to post a notice that he would hold a conference of the solicitors at eight-thirty next morning, and went home.

Eight o'clock next morning found him at his desk disposing of the mail in his usual terse and gripping style; and when the solicitors filed in he told them curtly that if any of them had thrown away his rate-card as the junk it was he might as well hunt up a new copy now, because from then on it meant what it said. King then drilled them briefly on the pulling power of the *Signal*, urged each one to do his best, and declared that while it would be hard at first, it could be done, and was going to be. After he dismissed them, King turned his attention to the multifarious details of his new job.

In this Miss Mulroy aided him more effectively than he realized. She took dictation without interrupting him, wrote "Damn!" without a qualm, mulled over a mass of detail, and watched her new boss with an interest in her Irish eyes which may have been due to his extraordinary policy, or perhaps to his boyish good looks.

The salesmen were not so well pleased. The moment they sprang King's ultimatum on a customer they struck a snag. The previous year's contracts expired one by one, and when they tried to sign them up for renewal at practically double the old rate, they were met with raucous laughter. Scarcely any new contracts came in, and the paper showed daily scanter and leaner, although the department-stores used as much space as ever. December passed, January came and went, and things grew slowly worse; so that when February was ushered in, with raw winds and slush underfoot, King decided to take the bull by the horns and find out what the department-stores would do when the first of April arrived.

HE WENT first to the bell-wether, the biggest of them all—the Bonton. Preston, the advertising manager, was a large-caliber man in every way, and he had been watching the new man at the *Signal* with interest. So he greeted King cordially and settled back to gage him.

"You've been throwing the gaff into the *Signal* pretty hard the last few years," began King without preface. "I'd like to see our relations on a new basis."

"You're right about that," Preston agreed smilingly. "Going to make an honest rate-card at last? Let me have a copy."

"You've got one," said King. "We're going to run on the old one; and we're going to stick to it."

"Can't listen to you," said Preston at once. "We kicked on your rate four years ago because we didn't think you were worth the money; I don't believe the *Signal* reaches our class of trade to any extent. I'm willing to pay sixteen or seventeen, but twenty-five cents a line is too much. Much too much."

"I can't agree with you," replied King. "It may have been true four years ago; you have a high-priced store, and our readers steered clear of it. But now it's just our readers—the men on a daily wage—who earn, and spend, the big money. They have ready cash; they are going to the better shops; and if you don't catch them now, they'll form their new buying habits with the Emporium and Bergstrom's rather than with you. Your 'better-class' man isn't as good a customer to-day as my 'wop' and teamster! Ask your credit department who runs up the overdue bills. Ask your jewelry manager, your women's fine-clothing salesgirls, who's doing the biggest buying—cash buying, too. You can't afford to lose that business, Mr. Preston; and you can't get it through the *Bugle*, either! Why, we're cheap at twenty-five cents!"

"I'D HAVE to think that over," said Preston.

"I'm going to bombard you with facts and figures from now on," King told him. "I know I can prove it to you! But I would suggest that you climb on the band-wagon right now."

"Oh, there's no hurry!" said Preston comfortably. "Our contract still has two months to run. Why do you want to know so soon?"

"So that if you turn me down now I've still got those two long months to work on you!"

Preston considered for a space, and King let him ponder. Finally the store man spoke.

"Suppose—which I don't—I admit that what you say is true. Still, why should I pay twenty-five, when for all I know the other stores will be given their usual cut? The *Signal* hasn't much of a reputation on rates, you know."

King showed no rancor. "I give you my personal word that everybody gets straight treatment from now on. There will be no rebates. That is a personal guarantee to you."

Preston stabbed a long forefinger at him. "All right; say that is also true. If we all—the stores, and the little fellows—stand pat, isn't it true that you'll change your mind and give us the lower rate? Pearce, who had your job two years ago, tried this same stunt when he first came down here; and we all held out on him, and in two months we got in at less than we'd been paying before!"

"You mean you'd try to freeze me out?"

"Well, it would work that way, wouldn't it?"

"Not as long as I'm convinced we're worth the money! Why should I? I'm down here to increase the revenue, and that's my job; I might as well quit now as to do what you suggest!"

"You may have to," said Preston, watching him keenly. "Will Mr. Welles give you unlimited time to put this across?" He did not miss the faint flush which stained King's firm cheek.

"As long as I'm manager Mr. Welles will back me up." But Preston only smiled.

"As long as you're manager, yes; but we've seen three ad-men down here in four years! Wouldn't it be foolish of us to sign a contract at twenty-five cents when quite possibly by waiting a month or so you'll be thrown out and we can get it from the next man for fifteen or less?"

King sat silent a moment and then leaned forward earnestly. "Of course, from your view-point that is the desirable solution, but the paper can not keep afloat on the present rates. Welles will either sell it or cease publication. If he sells it, the purchaser will certainly raise the rates. If he stops publication—I leave it to you—will that be a good thing for you, for Big City, or for the public generally? Briefly, then, Mr. Welles has given me a free hand! The paper must raise its rates! Now, I want you to give me the same square deal that you expect the *Signal* to give you. I want a new contract at a twenty-five-cent rate."

"Well, I've got two months to think it over," said Preston in mock relief. "I'll stay on the fence for the time being, anyhow! I'm betting you can't put it over."

"All right!" said King cheerfully, and rose. "Watch me! I'm not going to give you any odds on that. I'll see you again soon." His departure showed no signs of discouragement.

During the next week he interviewed the managers of the other stores and was differently received; but the net result was the same. They all thought it wise to hold off a decision as long as possible, in the hope that either he or Welles would buckle under the strain.

"IT'S plumb hell," he told Miss Mulroy. "I've got to sell myself as an honest man, and Welles as the original Job, and the paper as a darn good advertising medium, all at once to a bunch of crooks who've no idea in their heads except that if they hold out long enough they'll get space in this sheet for nothing!"

He had grown into the habit of talking things over with Miss Mulroy, not having a wife with whom to discuss them of evenings, and her understanding and sympathy cheered him more than he realized. Miss Mulroy marveled that King could remain so optimistic, in the face of steadily decreasing revenue, dissatisfied solicitors whose salary raises were long overdue, and the acrid comments of the spiteful Jones.

He went after the department-stores ceaselessly, kept Miss Mulroy busy preparing statements and tabulations of the spending power of his readers, and hounded Jones constantly to let him inaugurate his advertising campaign. That gentleman sat cannily aloof and told him to wait a month or so, knowing that the longer he waited the worse the paper got. For three months the advertising fell off; any contract, however small, was hailed with warmth; and Miss Mulroy tacked up on the wall an invention of her own, entitled "The Peach-Tree," on which she entered in jubilation and India ink every contract that came in, together with the name of the solicitor who had landed it. Small as they were—a thousand, two thousand

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When King walked in, unsuccessful from a three-hour fight with Bergstrom, he found his efficient secretary with her bright red head buried on her desk.

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lines—they helped in a measure to dam the drain on the paper.

One or two of the solicitors, however, feeling that King was so occupied with his outside work that he could not keep a strict check on their activities, decided to kick over the traces. Porter tried it first.

He swaggered into King's office with a contract duly signed by Solomon Menifee, of the Menifee Furnishing Store, calling for one hundred thousand lines. Ten minutes later he swaggered out with his discharge ringing in his ears, and went directly to Jones's sanctum. A few minutes later King passed out of his office and headed in the same direction at top speed. The other solicitors gazed after him, knowing intuitively that something was in the wind.

"Porter has started something," observed Waite, grinning.

"Well, King'll finish it," said Bartlett stoutly. "Jonesey won't get his goat in a hurry, and you can bet on that."

When King burst into the publisher's office, Porter had disappeared and Jones was entrenched behind a desk covered with odds and ends of paper. He jerked around in his chair as the big man entered and opened fire.

"Look here, King, Porter just told me you turned down a hundred-thousand line contract at the hundred-thousand-line rate!"

"And I observe that Porter didn't stick around long enough to let me hear him repeat that statement," said King coldly. "Well, he lied to you—just as he did to Menifee. Menifee never used more than twenty thousand lines in his life. Porter walks in and tells him to sign up for one hundred thousand at twenty-eight cents. Menifee wanted to know if we wouldn't be coming down on him for the regular thirty-five-cent rate when his time was up and he had only used twenty thousand. Porter told him not to worry—that I had authorized him to get contracts on that basis and nothing would be said about the short rate! The damn nit-wit! One stunt like that would queer the whole foundation the boys have been laying for the last two months."

"Well, what of it? Twenty-eight cents a line is six cents more than he paid last year and it's twenty-eight cents more than nothing—which is what you're getting now. How long are you going to keep up this foolishness? I believe you're trying to ruin the paper! Fools rush in——"

"WHERE Jones fears to tread," interrupted King ironically. "Now, I've just had Menifee on the wire and straightened him out on this business and he has expressed his willingness to take it up with us again. I think we'll land him yet. Porter thought he could slip something over on me and I fired him. Furthermore, I'll fire every mother's son of 'em that tries any of this funny business!"

"Sure, you fired the oldest and most experienced solicitor the paper has; a man that's grown up with the *Signal;* that's just like you."

"Well, he won't get any older or any crookeder with this paper, as long as I'm manager here!"

"I've half a mind to fire you!" screeched Jones, beside himself.

"You can't! I've got until June first; till then, I do as I see fit."

"After you, the deluge! A fine sort of square deal for the next man! Why can't you be reasonable?"

"I'm too damn honest," said King grimly. "But there won't be any deluge, Mr. Jones, if you'll just have patience and work with me. The stores will all come in like lambs the first of next month——"

"You've made that statement several times. Seeing is believing!"

"All right," said King shortly, and turned away. Finding the men clustered in the corridor, he called them into his office and proceeded to lay down the law without stint.

"You may notice," he began curtly, "that Porter is no longer with us." He explained the circumstances, and warned them significantly not to emulate Porter's efforts.

"YOU boys have got to get it into your heads that we're on the level; and the paper, after all, is only as square as you fellows represent it to be! Now, I know this business is no cinch. It means you have to work like hell; it means you've got to run against all sorts of crooked propositions and turn 'em down cold, and lose a lot of business temporarily; but, boys, remember you're salesmen and not order-takers. The office-boy can go and *give* our contracts away; it takes salesmen to sell 'em! The reputation of this paper is on your shoulders; and if a single customer can tell another one that any of you put a crooked proposition up to him, the whole effect of the work you've done in the past few months is going to be shot higher than the Himalayas! Please remember that. Class is dismissed."

Talking it over heatedly, some pessimistic, some cheerful and full of energy, the men filed out, and from then on they scattered over the city to rake up, from holes and byways, enough advertising to keep the paper above water. As yet the department-stores, still running on their old contracts, kept the losses from being crippling; but as the first of April drew near and none of them showed signs of renewing, King felt a helpless rage which drove him to work early and late in a mighty effort to convince them that they could not afford to stay out. A ray of comfort appeared from time to time; the smaller advertisers drifted in slowly, and just one week before the first of April there was a jaunty step at the door, and Mr. Mossberg stood bowing cheerfully.

He laid a pearl-colored derby on King's desk and sat down, dusting the chair with a vivid silk handkerchief.

"Good morning, Mr. King! Have you changed your mind by this time?"

"Can't say I have! Have you?"

"Well—I'm ready to offer—say—thirty-two cents. That's handsome, sir, for a twenty-thousand-line contract! But your readers buy our products freely, and it's only fair to give you the schedule——"

"You mean it's damn good business to tell 'em what you've got!" said King, laughing. "Now, see here, Mr. Mossberg, I want your business, and I want it bad; but I can't take it on any other basis than our list-rate. Do you get that clearly?"

"Very well," said the little man. "You're too high! If you're trying to bluff me, I'll say you're a good poker-player."

"If this was poker, you'd have me backed off the board with one raise; but it's business; just plain, honest business; and I couldn't shave the price even if I wanted to. Can't you see it that way? We'd do well for you in the matter of position; have more room up front every day!" He laughed grimly.

Mossberg palpably hesitated. Then—"And what guarantee have I that you won't let somebody else cut in under me?"

King's jaw clinched. "Only my personal word, Mr. Mossberg."

"I believe you," said the little man simply. "Will you have your girl make out a contract, please?"

When he had departed, the secretary and the boss looked at each other and smiled happily.

"It can be done!" observed King genially. "And now for my last shot at the big ones! If we don't show progress by next Monday, our friend Jones will wither up and blow away."

And he laughed, as one without a care in the world; but he knew, and Miss Mulroy knew, that the department-stores were no nearer giving in than they had been three months ago.

It was this knowledge which drove him to put every effort into the next six days. Miss Mulroy stayed after hours and got up statistics, arguments, graphic charts, which he carried forth next day and used as a club on the stubborn heads of the storemen; but to no avail. By Saturday the two were worn to the quick, so that King exclaimed with remorse at her hollow cheeks and she shook her head wanly at his weary eyes; but when they went their respective ways at four o'clock they both knew with certainty what was coming. And on Monday morning, the first of April, it came—"in one grand explosion," as King put it bitterly. There the paper came up from the presses so pitifully weak and thin that it was a joke on the street.

"LORD!" said King, holding the rag out at arm's length. "A regular April fool! I'm ashamed to let the newsies sell it! There goes Jones's buzzer—he wants to throw the gaff into me! Tell him he'll have to wait a while, Miss Mulroy, and send the men in." His assistant departed, and her last glance showed her that King, dropping his cheerful mask, had turned unseeingly to the window and was staring blankly out, hands clutching his hair in a gesture like that of a small boy indignant at the world. Her face was wistful as she sent the men in.

"Boys," said King, turning abruptly, "now's the big test. I couldn't put it over on the department-stores before their contracts expired; they're going to hold out on us until they're convinced we mean business. It's a tug-of-war, and it's up to every man to pull on the rope." He held up the paper. "Until we fill that up with advertising, the big fellows are going to hang on to the idea that they can smoke me out; so we've got to show some action. Every contract you bring in now counts double. Go to it!"

At this moment Bartlett came in and apologized for being late. "I know you won't mind," he said breathlessly, and his face was alight. "I've just clinched a contract with Childs, of the Childs Cigar Stores. A hundred thousand lines!"

All the men turned eagerly toward the salesman, and King, gripping his hand,

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"Oh, no, you don't," said King. "You don't give me any such orders, Mr. Welles, because I won't take 'em. I'm done."

threw up his head with fresh energy.

"Good boy, Bartlett!" he said. "That helps a lot!"

"Wait," said Bartlett slowly. "There's more or less of a string to it, I'm afraid. I told Childs I'd have to put it up to you."

King's eyes narrowed. "Be careful, Bartlett," he warned quietly. "If you gave Childs to understand that I would make any adjustments——"

"Oh, it's nothing like that," protested Bartlett. "And, in fact, Mr. King, I don't see that what he wants is crooked at all. You know he operates about three hundred retail tobacco-shops over the city, and he expects to advertise a half-page of specials twice a week. Well, he wants us to furnish him copies of the newspaper to clip and paste in the store windows. That means about six hundred papers twice a week—and the news-stands are turning more than that back to us every day! He says the *Clarion* will not only furnish the papers, but clip and distribute the ads for him; and of course their rates are lower than ours. I had a hard time persuading him to come in with us; and I guess if we can't make this concession, we lose the contract."

There was a long silence. Bartlett, his hundred-thousand-line contract gripped tightly, watched King; and the other salesmen watched him; and Miss Mulroy, who had quietly returned, watched him and wondered what he would do. Every one in the office knew what that contract would mean to the paper at this time; the stiff paper crackled in Bartlett's nervous hand. Finally King's brow furrowed into ridges, and he turned abruptly.

"God knows I'd like to be able to see it that way, Bartlett," he said, and his voice was very weary. "But—I can't! I can't see that a little rebate isn't the same as a big one in principle, and, that being so, I can't do it. I'm damn sorry, but I can't do it. Go after Childs again, Bartlett, and see if you can't sell him anyhow. You can do it! I'm—I'm damn sorry."

Anger born of unmerited defeat brought the solicitor to his feet. He started to speak, but stopped at the look on King's face. "All right, sir," he said after a pause, and left the office with his shoulders drooping. The other men followed him, and King faced his secretary with the nearest approach to discouragement she had ever seen him display. His lips were set hard.

"God!" he said. "What a chance! Poor Bartlett! Do you think I'm a fool, Miss Mulroy? Sometimes I do."

His secretary inspected her handkerchief with meticulous care. "No," she said, very low, "no, I don't think you are a fool, Mr. King. I think—I think—" And suddenly his cool and efficient secretary got up and left the office. King looked after her for a long moment.

"But—think so, just the same," he reflected. "If Jones gets hold of that—! But it's no use; this thing's got to be done either straight or crooked; and, by Heaven," he added defiantly, "I *know* it can be done straight!" Then he got up and went in to see Jones; and his smiles boded ill for that gentleman.

Jones held out the morning edition without speaking for a moment, and King looked at it without emotion. "Well!" snapped the little man, pursing up the tobacco-pouch tighter than ever, "it's just as I expected! I don't know what your idea is, unless you want to ruin the paper and me and yourself all at once; but I'm through. I can't fire you—unfortunately; but I can retrench expenses, and I'm going to! I'm laying off three special writers, the staff artist, and a couple of reporters to-day; and I'm going to let some more go next week if you don't produce."

King protested hotly. "Look here, Mr. Jones! We've simply got to keep up our circulation! It's the only club I can swing on the stores—the fact that we do deliver the goods to their customers. If the circulation falls off, we might as well put up the shutters!"

"I'm responsible to Mr. Welles," replied Jones coldly, "and I don't intend to run this paper into debt indefinitely on the strength of your optimism. I have not interfered with you; kindly do not interfere with me."

"Well, you'll be able to tell Mr. Welles,

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when you make your report on my defunct body, that you stuck the harpoon into the quivering carcass," said King slowly, getting to his feet.

"That doesn't worry me a bit!" replied the publisher, turning to his desk. "You started it; I'd just as soon finish it! The sooner the better, in fact, so we can get rid of all this monkey-business and start over!"

King, knowing that his cause was lost as far as Jones was concerned, strode from the office without replying; but he was far from giving up. From then on, the month of April was a furious, no-quarter fight. Jones fired their best men, got the editions out late on the stands, and so pulled the circulation down and did everything he could to make King's failure complete. But King went doggedly on, hammering away on the stubborn stores, urging the solicitors ceaselessly, struggling to win out before the expiration of his probation on the first of June. Jones sent a long report to Welles, filled with the perfidy of King; but Welles, full of rheumatism, wrote back tersely: "Fight it out. I can't make you get along together."

At this Jones became alarmed for his own skin. He felt that Welles, tired of the eternal bickering, might very possibly make a clean sweep of his advertising manager and his publisher, too; and that in such a case, old-fashioned as he was, he would have difficulty in finding another berth. So, a crafty plan evolved in his thin cranium. He judged, shrewdly enough, that King would either stick to his guns or resign. If he could manage to persuade Welles to give orders to cut the rates—well, Jones thought he knew what King would do!

Whereupon, Jones wired Welles at French Lick, the second week in April:

"King gone crazy; turning down contracts right and left; come."

And Welles, having just completed his semi-annual purgation, decided to stop off at Big City on his way back to the fleshpots and look into the matter in person. So, two days later, Jones, in a great flurry, ushered the owner into his office, fussed about him like a mother-hen, and poured out his tale copiously. Welles chewed a cigar savagely and listened without comment.

"AND look at this, Mr. Welles! Balance-sheet for the past week! We lost over four thousand dollars! And he has six more weeks until June first! You stand to lose at that rate, pretty nearly twenty-five thousand! Don't throw good money after bad! Every one of the stores is just pining to sign a contract, if we'll just shave the price a bit as we always have; but King won't do it!"

Welles contemplated the balance-sheet with a scowl. For the first time it came to him concretely what King's attitude would mean. He chewed his cigar more savagely than eyer.

"Won't do it? He would if I told him to, wouldn't he?"

Jones's little eyes gleamed with triumph. "He's just that big a fool that he'd resign first, Mr. Welles! Has some fool notion about giving his word to the advertisers! But what if he does? Let him resign; turn the advertising over to me. I'll have those stores back in the paper tomorrow; probably can get a good increase out of 'em, too, after the scare King's given 'em. You'll draw your usual income, and besides that you'll save his salary, too!"

He rubbed his hands.

Welles was tempted. Well, why not? Jones had done pretty well in the old days; all these squabbles were bad for his rheumatism; and that point about saving a salary wasn't bad either. He nodded bruskly.

"All right; have him in." Jones, concealing a smile, pressed his buzzer, and the two men waited in silence. Then the desk telephone shrilled and Jones picked up the receiver.

"Mr. Jones?" inquired the smooth voice of Miss Mulroy. "You rang for Mr. King? He went out at eleven to see Mr. Bergstrom. I don't think he'll be back before three."

Jones, scowling, hung up the receiver and explained. Welles shook his head impatiently.

"ALL right. I'll be down to-morrow and see 'im. Rotten weather here; feel punk; never did like the place." He rose stiffly, cursing Big City and the trouble his business made him, and limped out.

Jones, behind him, rubbed his leathery hands together and chuckled. "He, he, he," cackled the publisher, vastly pleased. "It can be done!" And, much enamored of his little joke on Mr. King, he toddled homeward and dreamed sweetly of the morning. It was the first time in twenty years he had ever left the office before closing-time; but he felt that the occasion warranted it.

Half an hour later a well-dressed gentleman inquired for Mr. King, and an office-boy showed him to Mr. King's suite. As he stepped inside, Miss Mulroy rose and offered him a chair, smiling her jolly little smile. The gentleman smiled, too; most men did when Miss Mulroy gave them a chance to.

"I see Mr. King isn't in. Is it worth while to wait for him?"

"Well, it's hard to tell," she said confidentially. "He might be in at any moment, or he might not come back until to-morrow. I remember one day he said he'd return at two o'clock, and he didn't come in until six; and he said he'd been sitting in a taxi with Mr. Bergstrom, in front of a news-stand, proving to him that he couldn't tell by the appearance of people whether they'd buy the *Bugle* or the *Signal*. He showed him that the circulation of the *Signal* isn't confined to the working class exclusively, as some people think."

The stranger laughed consumedly. "Sounds like him!" he commented gleefully. "I'll wait a while, if you don't mind." Noting with pleasure the fresh femininity of King's secretary, he became idly communicative. "I use a good deal of space, and I can't deal with your salesmen; want something special from headquarters."

"Oh, I do beg your pardon! But I've heard that so often before—and it always ends the same way!" Miss Mulroy said. "Let me tell you, sir, you'd get exactly the same answer from Mr. King, or any of the men, or—or even me!"

"Is that so?" said the stranger, with interest. "Now, if I were to tell you that I have a contract for two hundred thousand lines here, and would place it at twenty-four cents a line—which is only one cent under the current rate—would you say that it would be no use for me to put it up to Mr. King?"

"Not a bit!" she said with decision. "We've all had it drilled into us for the last five months; so I know! One of the men was fired for trying to slip such an adjustment past Mr. King. He says we all know the rates, and the advertisers know the paper, and they'll have to get together!"

"Well, I came in to put this proposition up to him; but if you're willing to stake your job on your confidence in his policy, I suppose it's no use," he said quizzically. "It's a pretty big thing for you to decide, though, isn't it?"

"Mr. King says a principle is the same whether it involves two cents or two thousand dollars," the girl told him. "He'll be sorry to miss you, but he won't back down on his rates! On the contrary, he would probably talk you over to his way of thinking!"

"You're pretty sure of him, aren't you?"

"He's a man anybody could be sure of!" she said proudly.

"Then you're willing to take the responsibility of letting me go away without putting this up to him, without knowing who I am or what the proposition is?"

"Of course!" she said promptly. The man leaned forward.

"I'm Preston, of the Bonton," he shot at her, and watched her eyes widen with comprehension. Preston! The man King had been after hardest; the man who would swing all the others; and King not here to talk to him! She drew a long breath.

"SEE here, Mr. Preston. I'm not supposed to be a salesman; but I think you make a mistake to use the *Bugle* instead of the *Signal* when you advertise women's clothing almost exclusively. The *Bugle* may be a higher-toned paper, a political paper—a man's paper, in short; but if you stop to think, it's the women who do most of the buying these days! I'm a college graduate myself; and I read the *Signal* because it's woman's page appeals to me; and I know lots of other girls who do, too."

"Say—hold on, there! Where did you get all this dope?"

"Why, my goodness, I've been in the advertising business for five years now! You have to think about something, don't you?"

"But your paper's been falling off lately. You've cut out Britton's political articles, and the Lion and the Mouse comics——"

"That's men's stuff, again!" she cried. "And besides, we'll take on all those specials again as soon as you advertisers give us a chance to! But the woman's page is just as good as it ever was!" She was flushed at her own daring.

"Well, young lady, you certainly seem to know what you are talking about," he told her with admiration. "Tell Mr. King I'm sorry not to have seen him; and you might also tell him about that twenty-four cents we're willing to pay——"

"I wouldn't bother him with a little thing like that!" she cried spiritedly; and Preston's hearty boom of laughter floated back to her as the advertising man retreated in mock consternation down the hall. But when, half an hour later, King walked in, unsuccessful from a three-hour fight with Bergstrom, he found his efficient

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secretary with her bright head buried on her desk; and when she lifted her face hastily he saw that it was streaked with tears.

"Why—why—my God! Miss Mulroy, what is it?" he demanded furiously; his heart contracted unaccountably. She mopped her face frantically.

"Mr. Preston was here," she gulped, "and he would have c-come in at twenty-four cents; it was almost enough—and I turned him d-down!" She dabbed fiercely at her wet eyes. "I told him it wouldn't be any use to wait for you, and I t-talked to him a little about the *Signal;* I talked to him a lot! But he w-went just the same! Oh, I don't see how you stand it, having them turn you down week after week! It would k-i-kill me!"

"You—you bully little girl!" muttered King under his breath. "Don't worry; I'll lick him yet! I still have six weeks! It can be done! You go home; you're worn out."

She smiled wanly at him and left the office; but for a long time after he looked at her chair, where for five months she had sat, so tirelessly, so loyally, aiding and smoothing his heavy burdens.

"Oh, the bully little girl!" he said again; and aimlessly sorted over some mail and suddenly got up and went home. He did not sleep well that night, but spent most of it mulling over a new line of attack on Preston; nor did he know that Welles also slept poorly in a hotel down-town, tossing on his luxurious bed and laying up additional acrimony against the man whose bull-headed policy had brought him to a city with such a climate.

Therefore next morning, when the mail had been disposed of and he was facing a day of fresh effort with determination, it was an entire surprise to King when there was a step at his office door and the owner entered abruptly, followed by Jones, who rubbed his thin hands and gloated over the coming downfall of the interloper. King rose, shook hands with Welles, bowed shortly to Jones and motioned to Miss Mulroy to leave them. The girl slipped quietly out as Welles burst forth:

"I'm sick of this, King! I sent you down here to get results! Result is every advertiser in the paper quits us!"

"They'll come back," said King confidently.

"Perhaps! But every week I lose four thousand dollars! And your salary besides!" Jones rubbed his hands. King grew white.

"YOU mean you don't want me here any longer?"

"Not at all—not at all! Mr. Jones says you are well liked by the staff and the advertisers. I just want you to be reasonable! Just to keep the paper producing; just to take what you can get, at the best price you can get——"

"I intend to," said King quietly. "I'm going to take what I can get—which will be all the advertising this city affords; and at the best price I can get—which is listed in our present rate-card. Just when that will come to pass I can't predict; but I don't think it will be long now. I give you my personal word that if you will hold out a while longer everything will come out in better shape than it ever was before."

"Oh, your personal word is easy to give," sneered Welles, "while I lose four thousand a week! What do you stand to lose by it?"

King's mouth tightened ominously. "My word means as much to me as your four thousand measly dollars could possibly mean to you, sir."

"Pooh!" said Welles, and snapped his fingers. "Now, as your employer I here and now give you orders specifically to take all contracts, especially department-store space, at the highest price offered."

"Oh, no, you don't," said King, still quietly. "You don't give me any such orders, Mr. Welles, because I won't take 'em. I'm done."

"What?" cried Welles; and Jones twiddled his feet joyously.

"AND, having resigned, it will be a pleasure for me to tell you something! Your other managers got the *Signal* into this, and I've worked night and day to get the paper out. You didn't like their methods, you don't like mine. What in hell do you like? Quimby and Pearce and the others tried to do the straight thing, I suppose; but blocked by this dried-up, fossilized handful of nothing here—" he waved at the petrified Jones—"they were helpless. They weren't there with the punch; but, by the living God, I am, and I'll stick it out if you'll only have nerve enough to stay with me! Can't you see that the minute the stores come in, this paper will pay twice what it ever did? It could be the most valuable property you own; but, rather than sink a few thousand dollars into building material, you let your whole investment go to the devil."

Welles tried feebly to interrupt, but was borne down. "And let me tell you, it's now or never for the *Signal!* The stores are almost licked now; a month or two, and they'll break and run; but if, after the fight I've put up here for the past five months, I fall down, what chance will anybody ever have to convince 'em he means business? If you can't see it, Heaven help you; I'm through!"

The sound common sense of this made some impression on the owner, although the violence of King's language angered him; but before he could speak Jones piped up from his corner. "It's all due to your crazy ideas!" he exploded. "It can be done! Bah!"

"You little shrimp, I say it can!" cried King, for the first time raising his voice. "As sure as I stand here, *it can be done;* and if Mr. Welles has an ounce of sporting blood, I'll prove it in three months. But whether he does or not, the facts are the same! Listen, you poor, driveling, jelly-fish—*IT CAN BE DONE!*"

Jones essayed a sarcastic laugh, but it died in his throat; Welles, bubbling with wrath, clutched the desk and tried futilely for speech; King, tense, white-faced, towered over them. And into this tableau came Preston, of the Bonton, and after him tripped Miss Mulroy, smiling; and in her hand she carried a contract which she jubilantly showed to King.

King's eyes dilated; Jones sank into his chair; Welles slowly regained his normal color. Then King awoke from his coma and introduced Preston to the owner. Preston's eyes twinkled, and he held out his hand to the advertising manager.

"I don't know what you were hollering about, but it certainly can be done!" he said heartily. "And here it is! This young lady of yours convinced me yesterday that I could hold out for seventeen years and never shake you; so I signed quick. I'll want dandy position, too!"

"You'll get position in rotation with all the other stores, as soon as they come in," said King decisively. "You'll get a square deal on it, but so will everybody else."

"What? When I came back first?" cried Preston; and then he began to laugh.

"Oh, well, I guess you'll do what you say; and if you say we'll get a square deal, I'm satisfied! You've got a remarkable young lady working for you, Mr. King, by the way."

"I know it," said King briefly; and Miss Mulroy pounced on her machine and typed frantically, "Now is the time for all good men to come to the aid of their party," hoping her ears didn't show. Suddenly King made an abrupt gesture.

"I forgot," he said. "I don't know that I've got any say in the matter any more." Preston's eyes widened. "Of course, Mr. Welles——"

"Eh, come, come," said Welles suddenly; he had been staring at the contract with satisfaction. "Just a misunderstanding, Mr. Preston."

Preston, sensing a tenseness in the air, found his departure suddenly imperative, and after shaking hands all around he left; and Welles turned to King with an assumption of carelessness.

"I GUESS we can forget all that," he offered. "Perhaps I owe you an apology. I'm sure Mr. Jones does!" Jones croaked feebly. "And in future I think he will work with you in any way you see fit. In fact," he added, with a subtle emphasis, "I'm *sure* he will!" Jones croaked again before the menace in his tone. "I shall draw up your contract on my return to New York. I take it you consider the Bonton only the forerunner?"

"The other stores will fall over themselves to get in, now that the Bonton started it," said King jubilantly.

Jones, who had been sidling toward the door, scuttled from the room, and Welles, taking his leave with more ceremony, followed him, leaving King and the girl and the contract.

"It can be done!" he cried. "And you did it!"

She flushed, tried to look indignant, and looked extraordinarily pleased instead. "Nonsense! If you put a conviction into me, and I give it to somebody else, the credit's just as much yours!" she protested. "But—but I'm glad I helped." Then she turned swiftly to her desk. She didn't want to show how really glad she was.

King guessed, and to his surprise it gave him greater satisfaction than putting over his advertising campaign for the *Signal*. He inaugurated his new campaign with enormous zeal.

"Miss Mulroy—Molly," he said, "there's another contract I want to put through."

She looked up at him, smiling shyly, and said: "I think perhaps later it can be done."

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"Settled Down"

By Edwin Balmer

Author of "Ruth of the U. S. A.," and (with William McHarg), "The Indian Drum."

Readers of this thrilling story of adventure will share the anxious suspense that kept a whole city waiting up for news one stormy winter's night. Out in the inaccessible ice floes of Lake Michigan an injured man suffered alone on an abandoned boat while a volunteer took the one desperate chance of rescue.

SOME unnamed person in a newspaper office, not considering consequences, threw down the gage thus:

"The only chance for this man lies in the revival of the will to take the extreme risk without regard to self which distinguished our war-pilots a year and a half ago. We have several brave and skilful flyers in this city. If one of them volunteers, we do not doubt that a surgeon will offer himself for this hazardous adventure."

This paragraph of challenge appeared first in the home edition of the evening paper which reached the lake-shore suburban villages, north of Chicago, shortly before five o'clock and which were soon distributed in spite of the blizzard blowing.

Corrina Stokely read it just after she had put her baby to bed after his five-o'clock feeding. She had been very happy only the moment before, as the scales had just proved that the baby was continuing the gain of last week; he was two pounds now above his birth weight, which, the doctor said, was a proper reflection of her own complete return to health and strength. Corrina was a rather slight little thing, even with her strength regained; her clear, soft skin never showed much color, except when she flushed, which she did easily—a habit that distressed her. She was twenty-three now and her wifehood and her very recent maternity endowed her blue, gentle eyes with a happy seriousness and a sense of deep responsibility which amused, at the same time that it more wholly enslaved, her husband, Gregg.

SHE had met him in 1917 and they had fallen instantly and hopelessly in love with each other; she would have married, but Gregg had been one of those flyers who would not marry in war time. Thus, only as his betrothed, she had watched from the grounds of the Texas hotel (whither she had moved with her mother) the maneuvers and combat-drill of the biplanes seven thousand feet overhead, one of which was Gregg's. Sometimes with a glass she had been able to make out his number; and upon one of these days she had seen him fall, not to regain himself till just above the ground. Then he had gone overseas, continued there the tactics which in Texas had won him notoriety for his disregard of self and had brought Corrina, simultaneously, utter despair and utter adoration of him.

In 1919 he married her and settled down; he was as hard at business now as ever he had been at flying; he had promised her to give up flying altogether, except for the two weeks careful training in summer which the government urged to keep its pilots prepared. So far, he had kept his word.

Yet, when it was given, neither had thought of any situation such as the present arising; neither had dreamed that such a demand would be made.

"They shouldn't print a thing like that!" Corrina cried, thrusting the paper from her. "They've no right to. No one can fly and live to find any one on the lake tonight!" And she went to the east window where the storm beat. Her trouble was that she knew that Gregg—if he saw this—would want to try it. "He couldn't do it. He'd just kill himself!" And in the grate she burned the paper which had come; but she knew that hundreds of thousands more were in the city; they were on every news-stand.

She went to the telephone and called the Stokely Company offices. A few minutes ago she had meant to do this to tell Gregg about the baby's gain in weight; now she did not even ask for Gregg, but for her brother, who also worked there.

"Winston? Have you seen the paper about the *Andana*?—I mean the part about the man Maloney. Win, I don't want Gregg to get thinking about that. He'd have to try to do something; and he can't—keep with him, as he's staying in town for dinner; I'm coming in at nine for the Ransoms' dance. I'll come as early as I can. He'll dress at the club. I want you to keep with him for me."

In the office, Winston Leigh—a tall, sensitive man of thirty, dark like his sister, but not otherwise suggesting her—looked through a glass partition to Gregg's brown head bent intently over some important figures. At last Gregg got up, whistling, and put on his coat; he opened the door beyond and said his pleasant good night to the draftsman and came out. "Ready to call it a day, Win?"

LEIGH got into his coat and they went down in the elevator. "I see they've found the *Andana*, sir!" the elevator man said to Gregg; every one liked to talk to Gregg and get a word from him.

"Have they?" said Gregg. "That's good. I hadn't heard since noon. Everybody all right on board?"

"All but one man, they say, sir. Good-night, Mr. Stokely."

"What happened to him?" Gregg was asking; but the people poured out of the car and swept him aside. "Good night, Fred."

Gregg drifted to the door where, in spite of Win's endeavor to lead him past, he bought a paper and stood reading the headlines and subheads.

"Radio locates *Andana*! Lost steamer, leaking and badly battered from battle with floes. Reports by wireless. Locked in the great ice-field thirty miles N. E. city. All hands safe, but one man badly injured. Ice-breaking tugs *T. J. Haffron* and *Long John* vainly attempt rescue!"

Gregg looked at his brother-in-law, his gray eyes alight. "Thirty miles off the city all the time," he said. "What was the matter they couldn't report before?"

Leigh gladly seized the opportunity to summarize and censor the news column. "Engine-room was flooded, Gregg; it shut off the current for radio, probably; shift of ice seems to have plugged the leak; they pumped out some of the water by hand and got the fire going again."

"How was the fellow injured?"

"OH, SEEMS they tried to send a man ashore this morning over the ice; but he reached open water about a half mile from the boat; he was lost in the snow and almost frozen before he got back."

"You don't say! Great stuff, Win! The arctic just off Chicago and in March. Sounds like Peary's party at the pole!" He started to glance down the column.

"That's about all, Gregg. Going to the club?"

Gregg nodded, and thrusting the paper into his pocket and turning up his collar, stepped out upon Michigan Avenue.

"Certainly cold!" he half shouted at his brother-in-law. "Great March weather; regular gale!"

It was very cold; and snow—the snow which that day had confused the man making for the shore from the *Andana*—filled the wind with fine, stinging, sand-like grains swirling into the glow of the boulevard lights from the great black void of the northeast over the roaring lake. It blew a blizzard upon Chicago; and Michigan Avenue, with its tall, abrupt blocks of buildings facing the water, of course was getting the worst of it.

Except for a few struggling figures making for the windbreak of the nearest side street, the walks were swept clear; the roadway was all but emptied of its usual crowded traffic; the city noises—motor-sounds, the swish of wheels, even the rumble of the Illinois Central trains in their sunken course in the strip of park—were completely smothered by the elements. Wind and water crashed and bellowed, though on the wind now a siren wailed from the direction of the harbor; short blasts of a boat whistle made reply and the siren soughed and shrilled to a wail again.

Gregg leaned toward Winston. "The tugs!" he called. "They're finding heavy ice packed at the mouth of the river. I guess they can't get out!"

The thrill of the combat of men, and

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He stiffened suddenly to listen to the ticks in his receivers. "The Andana! *She—they hear an airplane—It's circling them! Coming down!"*

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men's creations, with the elements halted him. He put his back to the frost-shrouded show-window of a milliner's shop and stood staring lakeward through the storm. He could see nothing beyond Grant Park—not even the lights at the river mouth or the beacons on government pier. But the drama of the event, upon which all the city had been centered for many hours, seized him with doubled intensity as he stood in the storm and heard the wails of the tugs returning into the river, forced to give up the fight.

Out there within a few minutes' flight—Gregg was thinking—was a steamer beset by ice, with its crew now in constant and easy communication with a city of three millions of people, and yet thrust upon their own resources almost as absolutely as though the *Andana* were in the Arctic Ocean a thousand miles from land.

"Come on," Leigh begged; and they headed against the gale north to the doors of their club, where they entered. It was too early for dinner yet, so Leigh led Gregg up to the card-room.

Neither was a frequent visitor there, but they knew most of the men gathered about the tables. Seven four-handed games were going on, with a couple at piquet over in the smokiest corner and a game of chess. About each bridge table one or two extra men lounged, looking on or waiting to cut in at the end of a rubber. In this club only a few of them were mere card-players; most of them were business men—executives of big commercial establishments or manufacturing firms, a banker or two, lawyers, an architect and two surgeons, who had finished their operations for the day and were relaxing. Middle-aged men or over, most of them; several in their thirties; but there was only one other man, like Gregg, as young as twenty-six.

It was a group of older players—Hilton, a lawyer, Callider, a leather man, and Renwick, the surgeon, who beckoned to Gregg and Win as their fourth man left the table. Hilton cut "out" and looked on while the others sat down.

"Staying down to-night, Gregg?" said Callider, who knew the Leighs well.

"Yes," said Gregg. "Corrina's coming in at nine for the Ransoms' dance."

"I see. Bidding?"

"Two spades," said Gregg.

"THREE hearts," his brother-in-law bid. He gave Gregg a cigaret, watched him light it and settle back.

"Three spades," Callider bid.

"Four hearts. Hearts, Doctor?" said Gregg. "Double."

"Redouble," said Win promptly and with satisfaction as he saw Gregg's lips tighten with the excitement of the contest; he felt he was playing for stakes far greater than ten cents a point.

Upon the leaded window behind Gregg the northeaster screamed and pelted; but Gregg was forgetting it. He set Win and Renwick four hundred and cut for Win to deal.

"I think no one will reach the *Andana* by water to-night," Callider commented. "How feasible would a flight over the lake be to-night, Gregg? In this wind would it be possible at all?"

"Oh, yes, possible, Mr. Callider."

"You have actually flown in a gale like this?"

"Not with so much snow in the wind; it wouldn't be much use; but once in a while in France, when some one was up every day for observation work anyway, we'd get a high wind. A few miles up—at ten to twelve thousand feet—you often find very strong winds; much more than this; but they don't bother you."

"Then the snow is the reason no one goes to the *Andana*?"

"The snow'd certainly make any one fly blind to-night," Gregg said. "And it would be no easy business finding the ship, even if they knew exactly where they were and could tell you. Flying in a wind, even when you can see, it's not easy to steer just where you want to go—unless the wind blows straight to or from your objective point."

HE BENT forward and illustrated with his finger on the table-top as he saw Callider's interest. "The wind's almost always blowing at an angle to the direction you want to go; now you're flying in the wind, so you side-drift—fall off—just as fast and as far as the wind is blowing. You've got to allow for that constantly and head at a theoretical point between the spot you're aiming for and the spot the wind's blowing from. That's why, when you see an airplane in flight, it rarely is traveling actually in the way it's headed."

"I don't see," said Callider, "how a pilot would find anything at all over the lake to-night."

"He'd certainly have to feel for it."

"If he found it—the *Andana*, for instance—could he land safely?"

"Might save himself, but not his ship; there seems to be quite a big ice-field about the *Andana*. Getting down on it would depend a lot on luck. You'd have calcium lights, of course—those parachute flares you shoot and which float a minute or so to light up your landing-place at night. You might have the luck to spot a smooth place; then it might just look smooth; you'd have to expect to crash some coming down in the rough in this wind; you'd smash your 'ship.' So, even if you got there all right, you'd not be able to get up again; so what would be the use?"

"I was thinking," Callider explained, "about what the paper was talking about—taking a doctor out there."

"No trump, I said, Callider," Winston interjected emphatically. "What's your bid?"

"Oh, two diamonds—that fellow's worse, they say."

"The man who was hurt? What happened to him?" Gregg asked.

"Are we playing bridge?" Leigh insisted. "Bid, Doctor."

"Two no trump."

"Gregg!"

"Oh, three diamonds. What about that fellow?" Gregg asked Callider.

"He's an ex-soldier who had a head wound—the one who tried for the shore. Had a plate for part of his skull; when he fell on the ice, after he was half frozen, he seemed to knock something out of place. He's crazy with pain and they can't do anything for him. They wirelessed to send a surgeon with instruments and anesthetics on the tug. The paper called up Rowntree; he was on the *Haffron*."

"Did the *Haffron* get out?"

"No; it's back in the river. One of the boys just telephoned to the paper."

Winston forgot to bid; Renwick did not. Callider played and Gregg, being dummy, leaned over to another table, picked up a paper and read, in the graphic lines of radio despatch, the report of the effort for the shore at the time the wireless had failed and the ship seemed sinking. "Maloney left the ship at . . . we found Mahoney exhausted a hundred yards from ship . . . he had . . . later Maloney went out of his head."

"Mahoney, they said once!" Gregg reread excitedly to himself. He arose and went to the window where he vainly rubbed the pane to make out more than blackness over the lake. Except for the wind and water, nothing was to be heard outside; the wails of the beaten tugs long ago had silenced. Thirty miles away—not so far now as the great ice-field drifted down the lake—was the floe with the frozen-in ship and the exhausted men helplessly surrounding the ex-soldier with the head wound and all unable to relieve his agony.

Winston abruptly stopped the play at the table. "Callider, didn't you see what you were doing?" he rebuked tartly. "He didn't know about that. I was trying to keep it from him."

"From him? Why?"

"He'll want to go."

"Gregg? Good Lord, Win, why should Gregg do it?"

"Ever know him to pass any damn fool fine thing?" Win returned, flushing with pride and fondness as he gazed at the straight, strong figure and brown head of his friend, his sister's husband. Win himself could know only vicariously the sensations which he saw were gripping his brother.

"BUT Gregg's married now and got a baby; settled down," Callider defended himself.

"Doesn't that only make it worse? If he goes?"

"He won't. It's too damn foolish; why he as much as said so himself."

"Quick," said Winston. "The cards; we've been playing."

"Yes; Gregg, five odd!" Callider called. "Come back here."

Gregg dropped into his seat. "They say once that the fellow who's hurt is Mahoney; then they say Maloney."

"What's the difference?" said Renwick.

"A fellow named Mahoney got me out of a mess once, Doctor. I got careless one day over by Vaux. It was July; our infantry were in the lines there. I went low after a sausage and got 'archied,' and had to make a run for our lines; made a rotten forced landing just between our first and support trenches; crashed. Wasn't hurt much, but couldn't get out of the ship."

"Who's a card shy?" Winston demanded.

"I'll take it. It was about noon, Doc; clear sunshine. The Hun first-line trench was about three hundred yards off; of course they opened right away with machine guns; then the Imperial artillery took the chance for a little direct-fire stuff with 77s. Our side opened up to keep 'em under; but it didn't do a whole lot of good. Some Heinie observer got my number and began blowing my neighborhood to hell when a couple of chaps—three, to tell the truth—made a run from our support lines to help me. The

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machine guns drilled one of 'em right away and discouraged another; the other one—a damned long, lanky kid from Detroit and a rotten runner—came right on. They hit him too; but they couldn't discourage James Mahoney. He cut me loose and got me into one fine, deep shell hole. Pretty soon my ship blew up and burned; but I wasn't in it—No bid on this hand—Now this chap out in the lake being named Mahoney——"

"Maloney," Winston corrected. "Besides if he is a Mahoney what makes you think he might be the same?"

"I know he's not," Gregg said simply. "That Mahoney went west in the shell-hole—of a head wound. I couldn't do anything at all for him. I've always wished I could— Excuse me; damn it all; excuse me; I didn't think."

HIS brother-in-law went out of the room with him. "Come to supper, Gregg. You've got to dress and then meet Corrie."

"Don't think I'll eat, Win, thanks."

"Then what are you going to do?"

"Telephone."

"Who to?"

"Paper."

Win went pale. "No, you're not!"

"Win!"

"You've promised Corrie!"

"She doesn't know about this."

"Yes, she does. She telephoned me at the office to stay with you and not let you."

"Did she know, Win, that he's Mahoney?"

"He's not Mahoney; Maloney, Gregg; besides——"

"Oh, what's the difference? D'you suppose Mahoney asked what my name was before he started out for me?"

"That was in war, Gregg. Every one was taking chances; no one knew, anyhow, whether he'd be alive or dead the next minute. It wasn't so much to do in war." Winston stopped and colored as his brother-in-law faced him. Winston was one of those who had not got over. "Isn't that right, Gregg?" he appealed.

Gregg stepped, unopposed, into a telephone booth and when he got the number: "Hello, city editor? This is Gregg Stokely; do you happen to— Yes, I want to, if you can get me a ship—better have ordinary landing-gear; probably have to come down on ice—any time you're ready—I'll stay here." He gave the club number.

"Are you going to call Corrie now, Gregg? Or shall I?"

"I'll call her," Gregg said.

Corrina was dressing, before dinner, for the Ransoms' dance; she was in her bedroom and Gregg's—a big, pleasant, very secure-looking room where to-night, because of the violence of the blizzard beating on the east windows overlooking the lake, a grate fire blazed to help out the heat of the radiators. The fire was not necessary; but she had had it lighted to undress the baby.

He was sleeping now, quite tranquilly, in his little room off theirs. Corrina had bathed him and dressed her hair a bit high, as Gregg liked it, and now was in silk stockings and slippers and those soft pink, silky underthings—as Gregg called them. Her round white little arms and shoulders were bare, with only the narrow ribbon straps running up.

Now she flung open her coat and his hand came against the flesh of her shoulder; he stooped and kissed her throat.

When the telephone rang, she answered from the instrument in her dressing-room. The instant that she heard her husband's voice, she knew what he meant to do.

"Corrie, hello, dear," he said.

"Hello, Gregg. Oh, dear, dear boy!"

"What's the matter, Corrie? You all right? Baby all right?"

"We? Of course, dear! You——"

"Dearest, I've got to fly to-night a little. You'll understand."

"Fly? Where, Gregg? Why?"

"It'll really not be much; just to the *Andana*."

"Oh Gregg—" She could not breathe for an instant. Then—"No, no! Not you."

"Why not me?"

She did not cast upon him his promise; nor did she answer that at all. Instead:

"They're all right out there, the paper said. Aren't they still, Gregg? All but one man."

"All but one man, Corrie," Gregg said.

"Gregg, you can't do anything for him."

"He needs a surgeon; he's going to get one."

"He's dying dear, I've heard. Perhaps he's dead now."

"No," said Gregg. "No, dear; he's not dead. His name's Mahoney, Corrie, did you see that?"

"Yes, I knew what it would mean to you. I knew you'd want to go; you—not any one else! But you mustn't, Gregg. It's no use; it's wrong—wrong to yourself, to me, dear, to me and baby! You'll kill yourself for a sentiment. I can't let you go—I can't—can't." She gripped with her hand tight upon the telephone instrument as though, with her physical strength, she could seize and hold him; but his voice eluded her and left her helpless.

"IT'LL be all right, Corrie; don't worry. I just wanted to tell you; don't worry. I've told the newspaper I'll go. They're getting me a ship and the surgeon. Good-by, Corrie."

"Don't ring off! Gregg, where are you?"

"Club."

"Talk to me; don't go. Talk to me, Gregg! I can't talk myself. I have to think—think. Hold the wire, Gregg.

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That's all I'll ask you; if you'll just stay there and talk to me or hold the wire while I think."

"All right, Corrie. You want——"

She no longer heard what he said; only his voice which told her he was there while she thought—thought of him in his thick, wadded pilot's suit; and the image of him thus made her weak with panic. Thought of him mittened and hooded and goggled climbing into the seat-pit of a gale-blown airplane facing northeast somewhere in a hollow of Grant Park; thought of him opening the throttle, steering his wind-swayed ship straight into the storm, bumping at first over the frozen ground; then rising into the air and skimming out into the snowy blackness of the lake.

She was too familiar with the facts of flight to have her terrors dwell long on the flight itself. She knew his skill and believed, therefore, he would succeed in gaining the air, he would be safe for a while—if his engine was good. The gale, in flight, would not greatly endanger him; he would become a creature of the wind; for him, while in flight, the wind would cease to blow. But the night, with the snow, must blind him. She seemed to see him literally blind—sightless—beating about over the floe-filled water. The noise of the lake rushed into her ears.

The moment before, she was hearing only his voice; now, except that it did not cease, she did not hear it at all. She did not hear the wind as it beat upon her windows and battered and whistled about the house; she listened to it only as it bore to her the roar and crash of water.

For perhaps half a mile out from shore—so she had seen before the snow came—the ice hummocks stretched solid and little broken; beyond that for four miles or five or ten perhaps—as far as the eye could clearly see—were ice floes, some little, some great, the fruit of the winter broken away from the northern shores of the mighty, land-girded sea and driven down by the wind, heaped up, piled, thrust under and piled up again. From below and between them, the water ceaselessly spouted.

The water, piling up and packing together the floes, made space for itself between; and in these wild spaces, great waves arose and hurled themselves upon the floes, roaring as they assailed the ice, dashing up, washing back or overspreading and driving the ice crashing, grinding, tumbling, breaking. And she saw her husband coming down, blind in the snow-filled gale, "feeling" for the level of the lake, skimming the ice-surface and, in the momentary glare of his emergency flares, searching for space to alight.

•

"GREGG!" she called to him. "Gregg! You'll not throw yourself away for nothing. You'll look, Gregg, and if you find you can't come down safe—safe, Gregg, come back! You can find the shore. They'll have landing lights spread of course. Come back, oh come back to me."

"Good night, Corrie. I knew you'd see it. Good night."

"No; not yet, Gregg. Talk to me."

"Good night, Corrie. They're calling me on another phone. Dear, good-night."

He was gone; and when at last, on her call back to the city, she got connection again with the club, he had left the building. Immediately she called the newspaper. Yes, they said; they had a surgeon to make the attempt with Mr. Stokely to reach the *Andana*. It was Rowntree, who had tried to go on the tug *Haffron*. The airplane was prepared; they were to start from Grant Park as soon as possible.

Yes; of course they had her telephone number; Mr. Stokely had given it to them; they were prepared to inform her and Dr. Rowntree's sister—he was unmarried—of developments as they occurred. In all likelihood everything would be over safely in half an hour; the *Andana* had rockets and strong lights; the skipper would be informed when the airplane had actually started so as to send up rockets at the right time. Yes, of course, proper preparations were being made for landing, in case Mr. Stokely had to put back.

CORRINA stood stark, staring into the fire and shivering in its warmth; she went into the cool darkness of the baby's room and knelt a moment beside the small bed. When she came out, her mind was quite clear. She telephoned her father's home.

"Father, Gregg's flying to-night. Yes, he's taking a surgeon out to the *Andana*. No, nothing can stop him. He's in the city; perhaps he's started already. In case he has to put back, they're arranging landing lights in the city; but he may get lost; besides the *Andana* is supposed to be nearer here than Chicago—I want lighted landing grounds to be arranged along this shore. Walton's Field is a good place here; near the lake and smooth and hard; the wind keeps it free from drifts. We'd better have a big fire built at one end, and then down two sides, leaving a long, wide lane the direction of the wind. Father, get people to place their motor cars with bright head-lights over the landing lane. Then call some one in Glencoe who'll do it for us there; and in Lake Forest. It's the only thing we can do for Gregg now. I'll count on it and telephone the paper to tell Gregg we're doing it."

As quickly as possible she called the paper.

"Just trying to get you, Mrs. Stokely," the reply came. "They've started."

"Oh!—what time, exactly, please?"

"Twenty-five minutes of eight."

"What time have you now?" Corrina fastened on her wrist watch.

"Nineteen minutes of."

"Thank you; can I keep the connection?"

"No; it might be some time, you see. We'll surely call you."

Corrina arose again and stood blankly staring at the pink evening dress laid out on her bed; she picked it up, not conscious of what she did, and put it on. Twice, in the next five minutes, the telephone bell rang; the first time it was her father announcing that he had called five neighbors who each had promised to get ten cars immediately; friends further north were doing the same. The second call came from a sixteen-year-old boy in the neighborhood—Henry Wallace, who had a wireless apparatus above his father's house and who was a good operator.

"Mrs. Stokely, I've just heard Chicago flashing out to the *Andana* that Gregg Stokely is starting for them from the city in an airplane. Is that true?"

"Yes, Harry. Have you heard anything else since?"

"*Andana* replied; I've been getting stuff all day; perhaps they're talking now."

"Go back to your instrument, Harry. I'm coming over there."

She went down-stairs.

"Your dinner, ma'am."

"I'll not have dinner, Jenny. I'm going to Mrs. Wallace's. Mr. Stokely is flying to-night to take a surgeon out to the *Andana*."

"To-night, ma'am? Mr.——"

"I wanted you to understand. Call central at once and instruct them to transfer all calls, from Chicago or elsewhere; to me at 297."

She put on her fur coat and carriage-boots and heard the instructions given before she opened the door. Her car was coming from the garage. The man saw her, halted, and left her at the Wallaces on his way to Walton's Field.

Harry Wallace had his radio room on the third floor in a sort of little tower with windows north, east and south—a noisy room on such a night as this. A number of boys were gathered there and a couple of men, besides Harry's father. Mrs. Wallace had waited below for Corrina and came up with her.

Harry, who had his receivers strapped over muffled ears to make out the tiniest ticks of the wireless in the resonators on the table before him, turned about to Corinna."

"The *Andana* has just sent word they're sending up rockets and have all lights lit; they're blowing their whistles too——"

"Have they seen, or heard, an airplane, Harry?"

"Not yet."

Harry bent his head; listened and began to write: "What's that?"

THE boys about the table drew back silently and let Corrina stand close. "We are clear and expect," she read. Harry shook his head. "Muskegon again," he muttered to one of his companions and continued to listen and write while the other boy explained in a whisper.

"A wireless gets messages from all over, Mrs. Stokely; from anybody talking within radio range—That's Muskegon on the other side of the lake; they've been trying to help all the evening. The *Alabama's* over there and Stufflebeam's bringing her out; she's an ice-breaker, and the wind's clearing ice before ports on the Michigan side so they can get through."

"I see; thank you," Corrina whispered, and she read, "to reach position—*Andana*—about—daylight."

"Luddington's been talking too, just now," said the boy. "They've offered to send a car ferry to smash through."

"Do you hear anything from the *Andana*, Harry?"

"No, Mrs. Stokely."

"What's that now?"

"A-n," the boy wrote. "That's Chicago calling *Andana*. Mrs. Stokely—they're asking if—*Andana's* seen anything. Now there's the *Andana*. She's saying: 'Chicago; no.'"

Corrina stared at her watch. It was four minutes after eight; and she knew that in the first rush through the storm steering by fixed reckoning, her husband had missed the *Andana* and he must be circling about, lost in the snow.

She gazed to the east into the blackness over the lake; turning to the south, she saw through the storm the yellow streaks of many powerful lights and the red flare

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of a beacon burning at the end of Walton's field. In the little, metal drums on the table beside her hand ticked, inaudibly to her, the chatter riding on the radio-currents of that night. Often the boy, who was receiving, wrote the messages down; sometimes he started to and gave it up, shaking his head. When he saw Corrina's alarm at this, he explained: "Interference; confused messages—from everywhere. Once in a while one drifts in from the Atlantic; once, I think, I heard a 'stray' from Honolulu; but most of it's from the lake."

"—eighty—tons—to-morrow-night—" Corrina read the transcript of a "stray" from some unidentified ship somewhere evidently short of coal. "—see—Billings—cancel—" that "stray" skipped.

It was eight-fifteen and now a firmer, connected message came in. "Muskegon," the operator confidently recognized the sending. "They're asking Chicago if they've heard from the airplane. That's the *St. Joe* now—Milwaukee was talking a while ago; all around the lake they're watching Mr. Stokely, ma'am. There—there goes Chicago replying."

He did not write down Chicago's reply; and Corrina did not ask what it was. The watch on her wrist showed half-past eight. Gregg had been gone almost an hour. On the silent lower floor of the house a telephone bell rang and Corrina stumbled down.

"For you, Mrs. Stokely," the maid said. "A newspaper."

"Just wanted to tell you, Mrs. Stokely," the voice at the other end said, "that the airplane carried fuel enough for several hours' flight."

"You mean you've heard nothing?"

"We've been telephoning all up and down the shore and when they get back we'll know it."

At nine o'clock the *Andana* inquired of Chicago, "Do you consider the airplane lost?"

A FEW minutes later Corrina went outdoors. She told Mrs. Wallace, who wanted to stay with her, that she only was going to the porch to breathe; but, when she got outside, it seemed to her that the men at Walton's field were letting the fire burn out and that some of the cars, which had been lighting the snow, were moving away. They were giving Gregg up.

She stopped a machine which was plowing through the drift. "Won't you go back, please?" she begged.

The driver recognized her. "Why, certainly, Mrs. Stokely," he said abashed. "I said to Mr. Leigh, if we were all needed—" he realized, vaguely, that he was letting her know that her father had been abandoning hope.

"Go back and tell my father to build up that fire; get more wood and gasoline; heap it twice as high."

They were thinking it was no use any longer; they were believing that Gregg would have reached the *Andana* by now or he would have come back and reported himself: they were believing that her husband was dead.

The roar of the waves hurtling on the seething floes filled her ears and the cold cut to her heart with its chill. Furies rode on the wind which screamed in glee that Gregg Stokely was dead. No, no! she opposed all her will to it. But if he lay in the lake, what was all her will now?

Two hours before she would have acted; done something, anything; called any one to prevent him from starting. She had tried through Win, who she knew could not overcome Gregg; then she had appealed to him—and let him go. A hundred things she might have said; a score of things she might have done now occurred to her, but too late. He had gone from her; the wind had downed him, the water had drawn him in.

BUT what was that beating above the wind? A motor clatter high in air; the thresh and ceaseless drum of a propeller.

"Gregg!" she screamed, triumphant to the sky. "Oh, God, you've spared me Gregg."

Louder, closer, so distinctly that fear of all hallucination was gone, the airplane passed; and she turned and pursued it, running with all her might to Walton Field. She heard it coming down and now, in the glow of the lights, she got a glimpse of it skimming the field and passing and going up again. Gregg would do that, she knew; he would have to take a look before landing; and while she ran, she heard him circle down wind, as he should; then again his engine sounded louder as he came into the wind; came across the lines of light glaring from both sides of the long, white lane she had arranged; his motor-clatter stopped; his wheels touched the soft snow and ran on, bounding a little and slowing.

Men ran from both sides of the lane; but she ran before them.

"Hello!" Gregg's voice called. "What's this place? Where are we?"

"Gregg! Gregg!"

"What? Corrie? You! Corrie!"

He thrust himself up with his arms pushing on both sides of his seat-pit; he got himself out and leaped to the ground where, from stiffness, he stumbled to his knees; and she caught him. Men were all about now, tugging at him; offering him whisky; others were lifting out the surgeon and carrying him to the fire.

"Hold the 'ship' headed to the wind!" Gregg asked the men; then, "Corrie, how are you here?"

Though his friends surrounded him in the glare of the lights, he seemed to recognize no one but her.

"This is home, Gregg! You've come home! This—this is Walton's Field."

"I see." He got to his feet and, taking a gulp from a flask, he shook off his confusion. "Then I know where we are!"

He stepped from her, stamping. She stayed beside him while he walked, her hand upon him, speaking to him. Still it did not come to her, till he went over to the fire and spoke to his companion of the flight, that he had landed there only to learn where they were, before he flew again.

"Want to go on now?" he said.

"All ready."

Then Corrina looked up at her husband and knew. "Oh, no!" she said and locked her arms about him. "Oh, no, Gregg." And with all her physical force she held him."

She knew that easily he could overpower her; but not overpower these men who would hold him, if she begged them. He had come back from death, and by physical power she was prepared to keep him safe. But he did not try at all to overpower her; he merely looked down at her in the light of the fire and with all their friends about them.

"Suppose we'd married in the war, Corrina," he said to her. "Imagine if we had."

Her arms, without her willing it, loosened from about him. "I'd not have stopped you—in war!"

"It's all the same, Corrie; isn't it? War—and life?"

He turned; and now he was the one holding to her, as they walked away in the darkness and behind the cars. "Let me kiss you, Corrie."

Her face was against his; now she flung open her coat and his hand came against the flesh of her shoulders; he stooped and kissed her throat. "All right now!" he said.

A minute later he was again over the lake.

Corrina stood at the edge of the field staring after him till the wind no longer brought the sound of the engine; then recollecting, she ran, not sparing herself till she reached Harry Wallace's radio-room.

"TELL the *Andana* to send up rockets again; the airplane left the shore opposite them five minutes ago."

"I did that, Mrs. Stokely," Harry said. "Five minutes ago."

He stiffened suddenly to listen intently to the ticks in his receivers.

"The *Andana!* She—they hear an airplane—It's circling them! Coming down!"

For five minutes Corrina gripped the boy's shoulders and he never once winced; then:

"The *Andana* again. They say: "Airplane smashed—landing—both men unhurt—have reached ship."

Later that night the radio carried the word that Dr. Rowntree of Chicago, who had been brought to the *Andana* by airplane, had performed successfully an emergency operation upon the ex-service man, Daniel Maloney. The next day the *Alabama* wirelessed that she had reached the position of the *Andana* and was standing by. Later when the storm cleared, the *Alabama* broke through the ice-barrier about the *Andana*, freed her, and brought her into port.

So on the second night Corrina and Gregg were again in their own room.

"Gregg, will you ever have to do a thing like that again?

"Will you have me—never?"

"My husband, it is become different, to think of you. Before that night, Gregg—" she spoke as though it was long ago—"we seemed so secure; you were back; we'd married; we had the baby; I thought no one could ever call on you again. We'd settled down. Then that came—out of nothing; and I knew you were going to go!—I'll never feel secure again."

"But——"

"But—love, love you, Gregg, as never before and be happier than ever in all my life. 'Suppose we'd married in the war,' you said to me. Well, we have, dear! For to a man like you, life's just the same as war! I'll remember and try to be, dear, your good war wife."

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Photo by Ira D. Schwartz.

Frank Craven and Roberta Arnold in the actor-author's comedy success, "The First Year."

An Emergency Masterpiece

By Alexander Woollcott

QUIETLY, modestly, with none of the preliminary boasting which is so often the work of the weaker psychologists of the theatre, a little homespun comedy sneaked into New York this season and established itself overnight as one of the best, if not the best, ever written by an American. It is called "The First Year" and is the work of Frank Craven. He has fashioned for himself a piece so unpretentious, so true, and so enormously amusing that it will find a response and a welcome in every American town that is big enough to have a theatre at all. If the ordinarily successful comedy can run, or at least hobble, a whole season on Broadway, there seems to be no good reason why "The First Year" should not run forever.

The words of the title refer to the fact that the first year of married life is the hardest, that a girl can never really know whether she has confided herself to the right man until after she has lived with him for a while, when, after considerable regrets and misgivings, it is more likely than not to dawn on her that her choice was somehow good. The slightly tipsy and exceedingly disconsolate young husband, in the midst of their first serious quarrel, sadly advises their dusky handmaiden, who has "got a offer," to "begin her marriage with the second year."

This thin trickle of orthodox philosophy runs through a play that is as simple and wholesome and familiar and American as a plate of wheat cakes or a book by Louisa Alcott. It is a comedy of everyday domestic life in a small town that shows the kind of observation which salted "The Rise of Silas Lapham" and the kind of homely humor which flavors a Briggs cartoon.

USUALLY, when our dramatists write of the forest primeval they do so from the vantage-point of a Broadway hotel, composing their thoughts to the soughing of an electric fan and the gentle plash of ice in a tall drink. When they write of small towns, it is in memory of painful one-night stands, and they cut their characters out of the comic papers, so that we have the recurrent comedy sheriff and the whole horrid tribe of Gosh-dern dramaturgy. The author of "The First Year," on the other hand, has seemingly thought to draw his material from life. It was a good idea.

Here we have a play so natural that all around you in the audience you can see people nudging each other and hear them whispering: "Isn't that just like us!"—a play so utterly untheatrical that it gets breathless over such humdrum crises as the serving of the soup before the melons and its moment of supreme suspense hangs on the question as to whether the aforesaid handmaiden (who is green as well as brown) will or will not break the new vegetable dish. Sympathetic women out front nervously cover up their ears, and altogether Craven accomplishes with that bit of crockery the kind of dramatic agony for which his fellow playwrights must resort to at least two revolvers, one dagger and a lighted fuse.

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Yet "The First Year" is the work of a Broadway actor—the nervous rush-work of an actor frankly in need of a job.

That such a play should have come to us from such a person is only superficially surprising. Back of "The First Year" are all the conditions which make (and always have made) for good work in the theatre. Such work, from Shakespeare's day down to John Drinkwater's, has always been done by people who were of the theatre and yet not of it, playwrights and players who were workers within the theatre's walls and yet somehow had learned, mentally or physically, to get away from it.

"The First Year" may not be the great American play—that always lies a little way ahead of us—but it is a good guess to say that when the great play comes it will have been written by one who, like Frank Craven, was born in the theatre, so that its idiom is his natural speech, so that he is as unconscious of it as you are of the air you breathe, so that its laws irk him as little as the law of gravitation irks you. And it will be written by one who, like Frank Craven, has from choice or necessity lived much of his life far from the theatre, so that he can think of a lighted stage in terms of a gazing audience and, what is more important, so that he knows intimately the life and ways of people in the remote outside world.

In such reflections there is much to be profitably pondered by the actor whose feet know only the path from the stage door to the Lambs Club and by the writer on some cloistered campus who thinks of the theatre as some monstrous strait-jacket in which his precious play must be confined.

To begin with, Frank Craven was born of show folks. They say his lineage can be traced direct to that eighteenth-century giant of the English circus who, after his retirement, set up the Craven's Head Inn in Covent Garden. But, anyway, his father and mother were modest troupers in the theatre of the seventies and eighties and were playing with the Nat Goodwin-Eliza Weathersby Comiques when Mrs. Craven had to drop out of the cast in time to permit Frank's advent into the world. She caught up with the company a little later and Jennie Weathersby stood sponsor at his christening. When his first play, "Too Many Cooks," was staged on Broadway seven years ago, one of the best performances in it was given by the author's godmother.

CRAVEN seems to have spoken his first lines from the stage as soon as possible after his learning to speak at all. That was when he was three, and the play was that trusty old standby, "The Silver King." Afterward he played many parts, often a mere walking gentleman, or rather toddling gentleman, going on in his mother's wake, as when, for instance, his father and mother acted *Mr.* and *Mrs. Micawber* and Master Craven played one of the many reasons why that great lady would never desert *Mr. Micawber*.

Those were the days when it was an established New England custom for needy troupers to take a town hall or op'ry-house for Thanksgiving or Christmas and put on a show in the hope of paying for their own festal meals thereby. Of such "turkey dates," as they were called, the Cravens kept many. They would get through the lean months somehow as summer boarders, and it was at such a farmhouse near Reading, Massachusetts, that young Craven was deposited to grow up and go to school.

From a youngster of five to a sapling of eighteen he was a farm boy doing all the chores and going through all the phases of young Jack Hazard, riding old Dobbin bareback to the meadow and melting away each summer when the hay had to be pitched to the high, stifling mow. In winter he went to the district school two miles from home, where there would be an attendance of as many as thirteen pupils on those days when the snowdrifts did not block the roads or when the needs of spring plowing did not decimate the roll. Often only two pupils made the grade (as you might say), and one of these would usually be Craven. You may be uneasily aware that this sounds like a biography leading straight to the White House rather than to the playhouse, but whether or not Craven would rather be right than President, you may be dead sure that he would rather be playwright than President.

HE WAS eighteen and working in the canning factory when chance ran him into an old stage friend of his folks, and the first thing he knew they were for trying him out as an actor. The play, as it happens, was still "The Silver King," for theatrical fare in America had undergone no revolutionary changes in the intervening fifteen years. Thus Craven went back to the stage, carrying with him memories and instincts and sympathies he could not have had if he had never left it. Many of these appear in "The First Year."

This new comedy of his is full of the little touches of lifelikeness which keep an audience warm with what, for want of a defter term, must be called the emotion of recognition. They are such vignettes of humanity as writers note and tuck away in their memories meaning to use some time. You would swear "The First Year" was a play over which its author had thus puttered lovingly for many a season. It is, therefore, the more disconcerting to learn that Craven wrote it not because, after long accumulation, it fairly clamored for expression, but because no one seemed to be offering him a part and he was in need of one; that he wrote it in a great hurry because that need was urgent. He began it in the middle of the night and in a time of great discouragement just twelve weeks before the New York première.

It had been a long time since he had had any success in the theatre. He had tried two plays and they had failed. He had ventured to London where an old favorite of his, "Too Many Cooks," was being put on with an otherwise English cast and under a contract so disadvantageous that, after a faltering run of two weeks, it was ruthlessly evicted. Suffering by this time from a serious inferiority complex and incidentally from an acute shortage of funds, he came home and went to work on a new play, and when two acts were written he carried them around one Sunday evening to read them aloud to those shrewd men of the theatre, John Golden and Winchell Smith, as prospective producers.

They listened politely, suggested some changes, said they wouldn't mind hearing the last act when he had finished it, and helped him to a cab. When the tottering Craven reached home, he said: "Well, *that's* cold!" and buried the unfinished 'script in his mental scrap-basket.

He would try once more. What should it be about? Well, once when he and Mrs. Craven had been playing pinocle in a Chicago hotel, they were talking about the first year of married life being the stormy one and Craven said that it might serve as a good theme for a play some time. Out of his subconsciousness he now fished that random idea, sketched a rough scenario, sent for some black coffee, put his pencil to paper, shut his eyes, saw a small-town sitting-room at lamplight time, saw the father reading the local paper, the mother sewing, the daughter strumming at the piano while she waited for the grist of evening callers. He listened. They began to talk. He began to write. The first act, pretty much as you see it now, was finished before he went to bed.

If nowadays Craven is being complimented for this work ground out under great pressure, if he is being petted and puffed for his great wisdom and penetration in devising certain touches and twists which, as a matter of honest fact, he shoved hurriedly into his play without thinking about them—why, it only evens up for laborious past efforts of his which somehow went unnoticed, and it is, in his own case, history repeating itself.

CRAVEN'S biggest success as an actor was scored at the Playhouse that September night in 1911 when he walked off with most of the honors of George Broadhurst's vigorous and even violent comedy, "Bought and Paid For." His rôle then was that of *Jimmy Gilley*, the fourteen-dollar-a-week shipping-clerk who adhered so expertly to his wealthy brother-in-law. It was an uncommonly droll performance, which he played to the hilt. The next morning the papers were full of him, and what amused him most was the critical approval paid his painstaking costume, which was at once sporty and threadbare, even to the socks. Actually his socks got a notice all by themselves as a supremely ingenious bit of theatrical costuming. Of course Craven smiled and buried deep the fact that he had selected those socks because they were the only pair he had in the world.

It had been a lean period before that rescuing rôle of *Jimmy Gilley* came along. His mother's last illness had come just the summer before and from her high rooms in Forty-eighth Street he had been wont to look down to where the builders were completing the Playhouse in time for the new theatrical year. He had grinned when she used to say cheerily: "You never can tell, Frank. You might play there some time."

But so it came to pass. The play of Broadhurst's was chosen to inaugurate the new theatre. Before the première, Mrs. Craven had died. The night of the opening Craven, waiting for the first curtain call, sneaked out on to the fire-escape to steal a few puffs from a cigaret. Dimly in the darkness above he could see the window that had been hers and he stood staring up toward it till the call came. "Well," he said, blowing a kiss up into the darkness, as he turned to obey, "wish me good luck." And so, with a trembling in his knees but a benediction in his heart, he started for the scene that was to lift him to the stars.

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Rocky would remember that crowded line of carts, the unruly mules, the huddled women, the yellow dust that clung thickly to the bright silks of the mandarins.

In Red *and* Gold

A Romance of the Greatest River

By Samuel Merwin

Author of "Temperamental Henry," "The Hills of Han," etc.

VI

THE STORY SO FAR

ON BOARD a steamer, leaving Shanghai for a voyage up the Yangtze-Kiang, are brought together Dawley Kane, American millionaire, his son, Rocky Kane, a much-spoiled youth; Braker, the financier's secretary, and a Japanese traveling assistant; Miss Andrews, an American girl, and her older companion, Miss Means; three notorious characters of the China Coast, Tex Connor, The Manila Kid, and a girl, Dixie Carmichael. Soon after the start, Connor and the Kid draw young Kane and others into a card game, which the mate of the steamer, Griggsby Doane, quietly breaks up. The Kid then arranges a boxing match between a Chinese "prize fighter" and Doane. It proves to be an occasion for gambling and Doane is compelled to knock out a foul opponent. In the fight Doane's strength and force of personality impress the elder Kane. The Viceroy of Nanking, with his daughter and retinue, is present; he invites Doane to luncheon. Rocky Kane attempts a brutal flirtation with a Chinese girl, who he does not know is the daughter of the Viceroy, later sending her an insulting note, which comes to the captain. Doane goes to his cabin to warn him and finds him smoking opium.

At the luncheon with the Viceroy are revealed something of Doane's past and of the Viceroy's unhappy position in the new currents of Chinese life, between the old and the new worlds. At the end he meets the Viceroy's daughter, Hui Fei, who asks to see him later alone. At Kiu Kiang, where the steamer stops, two deserting soldiers of the Viceroy are shot; there are rumors of outbreaks up the river. Dixie Carmicheal learns the meaning of all this through young Kane, and tries to get Tex Connor and the Manlia Kid to plan a raid on the priceless collection of jewels at the Viceroy's ancestral home. Hui Fei tells Doane her father is returning there to take his life, in obedience to the orders of the tottering Imperial Court. She herself is to be taken to the Court as wife of some imperial favorite.

At a dance on board, an evening later, Rocky Kane, moved by remorse, asks Doane to interpret his apology to the Viceroy and asks Hui Fei for a dance. She politely rebuffs him. Rocky in a fit of depression goes out to smoke opium in Dixie Carmichael's cabin. That night a battle breaks out between the revolutionists and the Viceroy's soldiers on board and later the steamer is found afire, and is beached. The Viceroy's party is rescued, but a child, the little princess, is accidentally left behind. Rocky Kane, roused from his opium daze by Doane, finds her, and with Doane swims ashore with her. Hui Fei warms to the young man's heroism.

Her father thanks Doane, who improves the occasion by offering to help the Viceroy to escape the fate that awaits him. The Viceroy is moved by this evidence of friendliness but is resigned to the Imperial edict. He invites Doane to accompany him home. Doane revolts upon Dawley Kane to bid for the Viceroy's collections of jewels and art treasures, but declines to become Kane's agent when the millionaire suggests that a better bargain can be made with the emissary from Peking who is on the way to confiscate the Viceroy's possessions. Meanwhile, young Rocky Kane, stranded on the beach with Hui Fei and the child princess, declares his love for the Chinese girl, and confesses that his opium lamp had started the fire on board the steamer. An English gunboat comes to the rescue of the white folks. On their way out to the boat on a tender, Rocky learns from his father of the impending danger to the Viceroy's family and swims ashore to protect Hui Fei.

Dixie Carmichael, Tex Connor and the Manila Kid, who fled the fire in the same small boat, reach a Chinese junk, which they immediately press into service and direct toward Huang Chow, bent on plundering the Viceroy's estate. At the instance of Dixie, the Kid attemps to kill Connor and instead meets death himself. When the junk arrives, Connor brutally orders Dixie to remain on board. She disobeys his orders and follows him ashore.

Presently, finding herself in the garden of a pretentious private estate, she sees in the distance Tex Connor, accompanied by a Chinese interpreter, both loaded down with spoil. When the native returns to the house, Dixie suddenly surprises Tex as he is transfering a string of pearls to his pocket. Both are in turn surprised by the Chinaman, who reappears at the head of a drunken band of native soldiers. Dixie has scarcely time to hide before they shoot Tex and carry away most of the plunder, leaving only a cape of pearls which she seizes upon and conceals beneath her middy blouse. Next appears a group of Manchu soldiers escorting a Mandarin, borne in a litter. When they stop to examine Tex's body, they are fired upon from a near-by grove by the drunken Chinese from the junk, who put the official party to rout and cut off the Mandarin's head.

Meanwhile Rocky Kane, in a conversation with Hui Fei on the steamer's deck, is astonished at her knowledge of Western culture, her erudition and her love of poetry, accomplishments that make him regret for the first time his neglect of educational opportunities. Touched by her grace and beauty, he is in an unaccustomed mood of appreciation. With the spell of Hui Fei still on him he later questions Griggsby Doane as to the possibility of an American's making the Chinese girl happy. Doane, noting the marked change in the young man's manner, advises him to make a thorough study of the Chinese point of view, mentions the difficulty of reconciling the traditions of East and West, and gives him a brief outline of Chinese contributions to art and civilization. Their conversation is cut off by the arrival of the boat at his Excellency's estate.

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Chapter Eleven

The Landscape Scroll of Chao Meng-Fu

I

TO ROCKY KANE the few hours that followed were to exist in memory as a confused sequence of swift-pressing scenes, all highly colored, vivid, certain of them horrible, others passing in a flash of exotic beauty; while the fire of hot, unreasoning young love burned all but unbearably within his breast.

He would remember the crowded line of carts in the sunken narrow road, the unruly mules that plunged and entangled their harness; the huddled women; the yellow dust that clung thickly to the bright silks of the mandarins; the confusion about the gate, and the handful of soldiers that came hurrying forward to help in a strange business up there; the trains of other carts that struggled to pass in the narrow way, while tattered muleteers shouted a babel of invective.

He would remember the sad face of Miss Hui Fei, drawn back within the shadow of the cart, and the faint smiles that came and so quickly went; and the efforts he made, at first, to cheer her with boyishly bright talk of this and that.

He would remember how he made his way forward through the press, without recalling what had just been said, or what, precisely, could have been the impulse driving him on; past his Excellency—sitting yet in his cart, calmly waiting, while the drabbled mandarins stood respectfully by; and how he found the soldiers carrying oddly limp bodies into one of the gate houses, hiding them there.

HE WOULD remember the picture on which he stumbled as he rounded the inner screen of brick—Mr. Doane and an officer and two or three soldiers standing thoughtfully about a fat body in spattered silks that was hideously without a head; standing there in the half dusk—for the shadows were lengthening softly into evening here under the trees—Mr. Doane then bending over, the officer kneeling, to examine the embroidery on the breast; and then two soldiers bringing up a pole on the end of which grinned the missing head; and then the sound of his own voice, curiously breathless and without body, asking, "What is it, Mr. Doane? What terrible thing has happened?" And then, even while he was speaking, four soldiers carrying another body by, that of a stout man in shirt and checked trousers which he felt he had seen somewhere before.

He would remember—when they had carried out the last hideous reminder of the bloodshed that had been, and while Mr. Doane pressed a hand to his eye as if in prayer—how he stood silent there on the gravel area, looking up into the trees and about at the dim quaint *pai-lous* on either hand, and at the pavilions behind them, each on its arch of stone over placid dark water; and how the lightly moving air of evening whispered through the trees, stirring, with the foliage, the faintly musical little bells; and how, into this moment of calm appeared, light of step, swinging her shopping-bag as she descended the marble steps of the pavilion at the right and came forward under the *pai-lous*, the pale girl, Dixie Carmichael, who glanced respectfully toward Mr. Doane, and at Rocky himself raised her black eyebrows while her thin lips softly framed the one word, "You?" And then, after a few words—the girl said that Tex Connor and the Manila Kid made her come; it had been a terrible business; she thought both must have been killed; she had contrived to hide—how Mr. Doane asked him to take her back to the women; and how they went, he and she, his heart beating hotly, out through the darkening gate where paper lanterns now moved about. He felt that to be the first sharp blow at his new life. There would be other blows; doubtless through this girl; for the old life would not give him up without a fight.

They moved silently on . . . the gate closed softly behind them. They were saving Hui Fei.

He was to forget what they said, he and she, as he left her out there and hurried back; but would remember the picture he found on his return—Mr. Doane striding off deliberately into the darkness beyond the little white bridges, while the officer followed with a lantern and the few soldiers, also with lanterns, struggled after. He would remember crowding himself past all of them, snatching one of the lanterns as he ran, and falling into step at the side of the huge, determined man.

THERE were broad courtyards then, and buildings with heavily curving roofs and columns richly colored and carven, with dim lights behind windows of paper squares. There were drunken soldiers, who ran away, and screaming women, and

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other women who would never scream or smile again. There was litter and splintered furniture and a broken-in door here and there. There was a familiar big soldier who plunged at Mr. Doane with a glinting blade in his hand; and then a sharp struggle that was to last, in retrospect, but an instant of time, for the clearer memory was of himself binding with his handkerchief a small cut in Mr. Doane's forearm while the soldiers carried out a wounded struggling giant, and then shouts and shots from the courtyard when the giant escaped. And he would remember picking up an unset ruby from the tiling and handing it to Mr. Doane. There was the picture, then, of a melancholy procession winding slowly in through the grove with bobbing gay lanterns.

And finally, to the boy incredibly, the place came into a degree of order and calm. Women and men disappeared into this building and that. Rocky sat alone on the steps of a structure that might have been a temple, hands supporting his throbbing head. The moonlight streamed down into the courtyard; he could see the grotesque ornaments on the eaves of the buildings, and the large blue-and-white bowls and vases in which grew flowering plants and dwarfed trees from Japan, and, in the farther gate, a sentry lounging. Now and again faint sounds came from within the largest of the buildings, voices and footsteps; and he could see lights again dimly through the paper. He wondered what they might be doing. His thoughts were a fever. The spirit of Hui Fei hovered like an exquisite dream there, but crowding in with malignant persistence came, kept coming, pictures of Dixie Carmichael. He wondered where they had put her. Perhaps she was already alseep. It would be like her to sleep. She was so cold, so oddly unhealthy. Doubtless, surely, he would have to speak with her.

He must have dozed. Soldiers were dragging themselves sleepily about the courtyard, rifles in hand. Two officers and a mandarin in a gown were examining a red paper by the light of a lantern. Then Mr. Doane came out and read the paper, and they talked in Chinese, Mr. Doane's as fluent as theirs. Rokey thought drowsily about this; considered vaguely the years of study and experience that must lie back of that fluency.

Mr. Doane, indeed, seemed to be assuming a sort of command. With courtesy, but with impressive finality, he appeared to be outlining a course to which the mandarin assented. The officers bowed and went out through the gate. And when the mandarin and Doane then turned and entered the largest building it was the white man who held the paper in his hand.

Rocky fell again into a doze; slept until he found Mr. Doane shaking him.

"Come with me now. You can help." Thus the huge, grave man, with the deep shadows in his face.

And Rocky went with him, guided by a servant with a lantern, through corridors and courtyards, glimpsing dimly massive pillars and panels in blackwood and softly red silk and railings of marble carved into exquisite tracery.

II

WITH the paper that the boy had drowsily observed Doane sought his Excellency. Dominated by the white man the attendant mandarin tapped at an inner door, then hesitatingly opened, and Doane alone stepped within.

The room was long, plain, obscurely seen by the light of a single incandescent lamp over the formal kang or platform across the farther end. Doane had not thought of electric light in here and found it momentarily surprising. The walls were paneled in silk; the ceiling was heavy with beams. Against either side wall, mathematically at the center, stood a square small table and a square stool, heavily carven. Seated on the kang, with papers spread about and brushes and ink-pot directly under the light, in short quilted coat and simple black cap, was T'ang; a serenely patient figure, quietly working. He had merely looked up; a frail old man, quite beyond the reach of annoyance, whose eyes gazed unafraid over the rim of mere personal life into the eternal, tireless energy, that would so soon absorb all that was himself.

THEN, recognizing the stalwart figure that moved forward into the light, he rose and clasped his hands and smiled.

"Only an unexpected crisis would lead me to intrude thus," began Doane in Chinese, bowing in courtly fashion and clasping his own hands before his breast.

"No visit from Griggsby Doane could be regarded as an intrusion in my home," replied his Excellency.

"I will speak directly, in the Western fashion." Doane went on. "His Excellency, the General Duke Ma Ch'un, commanding before Hankow, writes that he regrets deeply the violent death of the eunuch, Chang Yuan-fu, on your Excellency's premises while dutifully engaged on the business of her Imperial Majesty, and cordially requests that your Excellency come at once to headquarters as his personal guest to assist him in making an inquiry into the tragedy. He supplements this invitation with a copy of a telegram from his Excellency Yuan Shih-k'ai, ordering him to guard at once your person and property."

The simple, elderly man who had been a Minister, a Grand Councillor and a Viceroy, seemed to recoil slightly as his eyes drooped to the papers about him; then he reached, with a withered hand that trembled slightly, for the paper and very slowly read it through.

"His Excellency, Duke Ma Ch'un," Doane added gently, "has sent an escort of one hundred soldiers to escort you fittingly to his headquarters. They are waiting now at the outermost gate. I took it upon myself in this hour of sorrow and confusion to advise them, through the mouths of your loyal officers, that your Excellency is not to be disturbed before dawn."

Slowly, with an expressionless face, the Viceroy folded the paper and laid it on the kang. He sank, then, beside it; with visible effort indicating that his visitor sit as well. But Doane remained standing—enormously tall, broad, strong; a man to command without question of rank or authority; a man, it appeared, hardly conscious of the immense power of personality that was so plainly his.

"Your Excellency is aware," thus the commanding person standing so strongly there, "that to admit the authority of Duke Ma Ch'un at this sorrowful time is to submit both yourself and your lovely daughter to a fate that is wholly undeserved, one that I—if I may term myself the friend of both—can not bring myself to consider without indulging the wish to offer strong resistance. It has been said, 'The truly great man will always frame his actions with careful regard to the exigencies of the moment and trim his sail to the favoring breeze.' Your Excellency must forgive me if I suggest that, whatever value you may place upon your own life, we can not thus abandon your daughter, Hui Fei."

The Viceroy's voice, when he spoke, had lost much of its timbre. It was, indeed, the voice of a weary old man. Yet the words came forth with the old kindly dignity.

"I asked you, Griggsby Doane, to make with me this painful journey to my home. We did not know then that we were moving from one scene of tragedy to another more terrible. But motive must not wait on circumstance. It need not be a hardship for my other children to live on in Asia as Asiatics. As such they were born. They know no other life. They will know as much happiness as most. But with Hui Fei it is different. She must not be held away from contact with the white civilization. I did not give her this modern education for such an end as that. Hui Fei is an experiment that is not yet completed. She must have her chance. That is why I brought you here, Griggsby Doane. My daughter must be got to Shanghai. There she has friends. I have ventured to count on your experience and good-will to convey her safely there. Will you take her—now? To-night? I had meant to send with her the jewels and the paintings of Ming, Sung and Tang. Both collections are priceless. But the gems are gone—to-night. The paintings, however, remain. Will you take those and my daughter, and two servants—there are hardly more that I can trust—and slip out by the upper gate, and in some way take her safely to Shanghai?"

"SHE would not go," said Doane. "Not while you, your Excellency, live, or while your body lies above ground."

The Viceroy, hesitating, glanced up at the vigorous man who spoke so firmly, then down at the scattered papers on the kang. In the very calm of that shadowed face he felt the bewildering strength of the white race; and he knew in his heart that the man was not to be gainsaid. His mind wavered. For perhaps the first time in his shrewd, patiently subtle life, he felt the heavy burden of his years.

"I will send for her," he said now, slowly. "I will give her into your keeping. At my command she will go."

"No, your Excellency, I have already sent word to her to prepare herself for the journey. Again you must forgive me. Time presses. It remains only to collect the paintings. You must have those, at the least. We start now in a very few moments. I have found here, a prisoner in your palace, the master of a junk that lies at the river bank, and have taken it upon myself to detain him further. He will convey us to Shanghai. It is now but a few hours before dawn. Hostile soldiers stand impatient at the outermost gate, eager to heap shame upon you and all that is yours. You must change your clothing—

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Seated on the kang, with papers spread about and brushes and ink-pot directly under the light, in quilted coat and simple black cap, was T'ang; a serenely patient figure, quietly working.

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the dress of a servant would be best."

He waited, standing very still.

"You will forgive indecision in a man of my years," began the Viceroy. After a moment he began again. "The world has turned upside down, Griggsby Doane."

"You will come?"

The Viceroy sighed. Trembling fingers reached out to gather the papers.

"I will come," he said.

III

ADRIFT in unreality, fighting off from moment to moment the drowsy sense that these strange events were but a blur of dreams in which nothing could be true, nothing could matter, Rocky found himself at work in a dim room, taking down in great handfuls, from shelves, scrolls of silk wound on rods of ivory and putting them in lacquered boxes. Mr. Doane was there, and the servant, and a second servant of lower class, in ragged trousers and with his cue tied about his head. Still another Chinese appeared, shortly, in blue gown and sleeveless short jacket; an older man who looked, in the flickering faint light of the single lantern, curiously like the Viceroy himself. The first servant disappeared and returned with the short poles of bamboo used everywhere in China in carrying burdens over the shoulder, and with cords and squares of heavy cotton cloth.

Every bit of woodwork that his hands touched, in moving about, Rocky found to be intricately carven and gilded and inlaid with smooth lacquer. And dimly, crowded about the walls, he half saw, half sensed, innumerable vases, small and large, with rounding surfaces of cream-colored crackle and blood red and blue and white and green which threw back the moving light like a softly changing kaleidoscope. And there were screens that gave out, from their profound shadows, the glint of gold.

They packed the boxes together, wrapped the large and heavy cubes in the squares of cloth and lashed them to hang from the bamboo poles. Four of them, then, Mr. Doane, Rocky himself and the servants, each balanced a pole over his shoulders and lifted the bulky cubes. The old man, who surely, now, was the Viceroy, carried a European hand-bag. There were other parcels. They made their way along a nearly dark corridor and out into the moonlight. Here, in a porch, stood four silent figures—Dixie Carmichael he distinguished first; then Hui Fei, wearing a short coat and women's trousers and a loose cloak. Her hair was parted and lay smoothly on her pretty head, glistening in the moonlight. And the little princess was there, clinging to the hand of her sister and rubbing her eyes. They moved silently on, all together, following a path that wound among shrubbery, over an arching bridge to a gate.

Rocky could dimly see the timbers studded with spikes and the long hinges of bronze. The servant, with a great key, unlocked the gate, which closed softly behind them.

The pole weighed heavily on Rocky's unaccustomed shoulder. There was a trick of timing the step to the swing of the bales, that, stumbling a little, he caught. He was to remember this—the little file of men and women gathered from the two ends of the earth and walking without a spoken

The lao-pan of the river junk.

sound down through a twisting, sunken Chinese road to the Yangtze. And sensing the gathering drama of his own life, brooding over it with slowly increasing nervous intensity, he found himself coming awake. If this kept on, he would soon be excitedly beyond sleep. But it didn't matter. They were saving Hui Fei. Not a word of explanation had been offered; but it was coming clear. As for the rest of it, he asked himself how it could matter. The presence of Miss Carmichael, a dangerous girl, an adventuress—he was thinking quite youthfully about her—who might easily be capable of anything, who could in a moment destroy the hope that was the only foundation, thus far, of his new life, and perhaps would choose to destroy it—even this, he tried to tell himself, couldn't possibly matter. Over and over, stumbling and shuffling along, he told himself that; almost convinced himself that he believed it.

He was to remember most vividly of all the first glimpse, through a notch in the low hills, of the river. The Viceroy paused at that point, and turning back from the shining picture before him, when the moonlight silvered the unruffled surface of the water, toward the home of his ancestors over the hill, and in a low but again musical voice spoke a few lines in which even the American youth could detect the elusive vowel rimes of a Chinese poem. And he saw that Mr. Doane stood by with the slightly bowed head of one who attends a religious ceremony. It was moving. But could he have understood the words the boy would have been puzzled. For the poem—the "Surrendering" of Po Chu-I—breathed resignation, humility, the negative philosophy so dear to Chinese tradition, but nothing of religion in the sense that he, a Westerner, understood the word, nothing of mysticism or romantic illusion or childlike faith; rather a gentle recognition of the fact that life must go as it had come, unexplained, without tangible evidence of a personal hereafter; that, too, the individual is as nothing in the vast scheme of nature.

It fell on the sensitively sympathetic ear of Griggsby Doane roughly as follows:

"Dwell not on the things that have gone into the past,
For in retrospection lies only regret;
Attempt not to peer into hours that lie before,
For that makes stoutest hearts to quake and fret.
Better it is to sit unmoved in your chair;
Better to lie abed as a millstone lies;
When it is time for food to open the mouth;
When it is time for sleep to close the eyes."

They were ferried out, shortly after this, to the great junk they had twice seen within the twenty-four hours, her smooth sides curving yellow in the moonlight, her decks now scraped and scrubbed clean, flowers blooming in porcelain pots about a charming gallery that extended high over the river astern. The crew, roused from slumber in the well amidships and forward, came swarming out from under the low-spread mattings. The lao-pan stepped nimbly to his post amidships on the poop. The heavy tracking ropes were hauled aboard, and the craft swung slowly off down the current.

Doane, with a lantern, escorted his Excellency and Hui Fei, and the whimpering little princess, to the rooms below; then returned, and with the same impersonal courtesy conducted Miss Carmichael down the steps. But at the door he indicated she stopped short, wavered a moment, lightly, on the balls of her feet. Then she accepted the lantern from him, bit her lip, and let fall the curtain without replying to his suggestion that she had better sleep if she could.

Alone there, she held up the lantern. The floor had been lately scrubbed; but, even so, she made out a faint broad stain in the wood. And a bed of clean matting was spread where she had left a grizzly heap.

IV

FOR a time Dixie stood by the square small window, looking out over the shining river toward the dim northern bank with its hills that seemed to drift at a snail's pace off astern. Her quick mind had never been farther from sleep. Her thin hands felt through her blouse the twisted ropes of pearls that were wound about her waist. Her lips pressed tightly together. These pearls represented a fortune beyond even Dixie's calculating dreams. To keep them successfully hidden during the days, perhaps weeks to come, of floating down the river in close companionship with these two strong observant men, and a half-crazy American boy, and clever Oriental women, would test her resourcefulness and her nerve. Though she felt no doubt of the latter.

The thing was tremendous. Now that the confusion of the day and night were over with, she found a thrill in considering the problem, while her sensitive fingers pressed and pressed again the hard little globes. There were so many of them; such beauties, she knew, in form and size and color. Never again would such an opportunity come to her. It was, precisely, if on the grandest scale imaginable, her sort of achievement. Tex was gone. The Kid was gone. No one could claim a share or a voice; it was all hers—wealth, power, even, perhaps, at the last, something near respectability. For money, enough of it, she knew, will accomplish even that. While, on the other hand, to fail now might, would, spell a life of drab

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adventure along the Coast, without even a goal, without a decent hope; with, always, the pitiless years gaining on her.

She searched, tiptoeing, about the room, lantern in hand, for a place to hide her treasure; then reconsidered. In some way she must keep the pearls about her person; though not, as now, looped around her waist. An accidental touch there might start the fateful questioning.

She put down the lantern; stood for a long time by the curtained door, listening. From up and down the passage came only the heavy breathing of exhausted, sleeping folk. She slipped out cautiously; made her way to the sloping deck above—how vividly familiar it was—tiptoed lightly aft, past the uncurious helmsman, around the huge coils of rope and the piled-up fenders of interwoven matting, out to the pleasant gallery where the flowers were.

And then, as she stepped down and paused to breathe slowly, deeply again the heavy-sweet perfume of the tuberoses, a boyish figure sprang up, with a nervous little gasp of surprise, from the steamer chair of Hongkong grass.

She said, in her quiet way: "Oh, hello!" And then, with a quick sidelong glance at him, accepted the chair he offered. He seemed uncertain as to whether he would go or stay. Lowering her lids, she studied him. He was standing the excitement well, even improving. His carriage was better; he stood up well on his strong young legs. And he was quieter, better in hand, though of course the never-governed, long over-stimulated emotions would not be lying very deep beneath this new, more manly surface. He was very good-looking, really a typical American boy.

He stood now, fingering the petals of a dahlia and gazing out astern into the luminous night. She pondered the question of exerting herself again to win him. The money was there, plenty of it. He would be as helpless as ever in her experienced hands. And the mere use of her skill in trapping and stripping him would be enjoyable. He was lingering—for some reason.

She decided in the negative. He would surely become tempestuous. And as surely, if she permitted that, he would discover the pearls. And—again the thrill of mastery swept through her finely strung nerves—she had those. They were enough. But they must be better hidden. There was her problem still, a problem that might at any instant become delicately acute. She considered it, lying comfortably back in the chair, luxuriating in the richly blended scent of the crowded blossoms, while her nearly closed eyes studied the restless boy.

Hui Fei's hair lay smoothly on her pretty head, glistening in the moonlight, and the little princess was there, clinging to the hand of her sister.

ABRUPTLY he turned. What now? Was he about to become tempestuous all on his own? It would be anything but out of character. Her slight muscles tightened, but her face betrayed no emotion, would have betrayed none in a more searching light than this soft flood from the moon. He was excited over the Manchu princess, of course. She hadn't missed that. But in the case of an ungoverned boy, she well knew, the emotion itself could be vastly more important than its immediate object. But now she was to meet with a small surprise.

"Look here!" he began, crude, naive, as always, "there's something—perhaps—I ought to tell you. I tried to carry on with you. You've got a right to think anything about me——"

At least he was keeping his voice down. She lay still; let him talk.

"—but I've changed. Smile at that, if you want to!"

She did smile faintly, but only at his clear, clean ignorance of the insult that underlay his words.

"—I *was* on the loose. It's different now. I'm going to try to do something with my life. Whatever happens—I mean however my luck may seem to turn——"

He could hardly go on with this. The

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next few words were swallowed down. It was plain enough that he couldn't think clearly. And he couldn't possibly know that he was giving her an opening through which, within a very few moments, she was to see the outline of the policy she must pursue during these difficult days to come on the junk.

She lifted her head; leaned on an elbow.

"Do you know," she said, in her clear low voice that seemed, now, to have a note of friendliness, "I'm sorry for you."

"Sorry for me!"

"Don't think I can't see how it is. And you mustn't misunderstand me. I'm older than you. I'm pretty experienced. My life has been harder than you will ever know. There couldn't be anything serious between you and me. You've wakened up to that."

The new note in her voice puzzled him, but caught his interest. He stood looking straight down at her.

"I know you're in love," she went on.

"But——"

"Don't be silly. It's plain enough. She's very attractive. Nobody could blame you."

"She's wonderful!"

"It's nice to see you feeling that way. It—it's no good our talking about it, you and me. All I've got to say is—please don't think I'd bother you. I may have led a rough life at times—a girl alone, who has to live by her wits—but— Oh, well, never mind that! Every man has had his foolish moments. I understand you better than you will ever know—and—well, here's good luck!" And she offered her hand.

He took it, breathless, eager. He seemed, then, on the point of pouring out his story to this new, surprising friend. But a slight sound caught his attention. He looked up, and slowly let fall the hand that was gripped in his; for at the break of the deck, just above them, hesitating, very slim and wan, stood Miss Hui Fei.

V

THE situation was, of course, in no way so dramatic as it seemed to the boy. He, indeed, drew back, overcome; the habit of guilty thought was not to be thrown off in a moment. Miss Carmichael, sensing that he would begin erecting the incident into a situation the moment he could clumsily speak, took the matter in hand; rising, and quietly addressing herself to the Manchu girl. Breeding, of course, was not hers, could not be; but her calm manner and her instinct for reticence could seem, as now, not unlike the finer quality.

"Do have this chair," she said. "I was going down."

Miss Hui Fei smiled faintly. "I coul'n't sleep," she murmured.

"There's one little article I suppose none of us thought to bring—" thus Miss Carmichael, balancing in her light way on the balls of her feet—"needle and thread." She even indulged in a little passing laugh.

"I think my maid—" began Miss Hui Fei.

"Oh—no! I wouldn't bother you!"

"Yes! Please; I don't mind."

She turned; and the boy started impulsively toward her. Miss Carmichael moved away, over the deck, but heard him saying, in a broken voice—

"You'll come back? I've got to tell you something."

To which Miss Hui Fei replied, in a voice that was meant to be at once pleasant and impersonal—

"Why—yes. I think I'll come back. It's so close down there."

The two young women went below. Quietly Miss Carmichael waited in the passage.

The needle and thread were shortly forthcoming. The white girl smiled; seeming really friendly there in the dim ray of light that slanted in through a window.

"It's good of you," she said.

"Oh, no—it's nothing."

"We're in for a rather uncomfortable trip of it. I suppose—I hope you'll let me do anything I can to help you. I'm more used to knocking about, of course."

"We'll all make the best of it," said the Manchu girl, and turned, with an effort at a smile, toward the stairs.

Miss Carmichael entered her own room. The lantern still burned, but the candle-end was low. She saw now an iron lamp, an open dish full of oil with a floating wick. This she lighted with the candle. Next, moving about almost without a sound, she fastened the swaying door-curtain with pins. Then she slipped out of her blouse and skirt; untied the pearl cape; and seated on the bed of matting, with her back to the door, began patiently sewing the pearls into her undergarments. It was to be a long task. Before dawn the lamp burned out, and fearful of being caught asleep with the amazing treasure about her she stood at the window and let the wind blow into her face until the faintly spreading light of dawn made the work again possible. The drowsiness that nearly overcame her now she fought off with an iron will. Nothing mattered—nothing but success. Her thin, deft fingers worked in a tireless rhythm. Only once, very briefly, did she yield to the impulse to weigh the exquisite lustrous globes in her hands; to hold them close to the flickering lamp. Her tireless reason told her that this wouldn't do. It brought an excited throbbing to her weary head. She settled again to her task; time enough to gloat later. By way of a healthy mental occupation she counted the pearls as she threaded them, up to a thousand—on up to two thousand—then (the sun was redly up now; and folk were stirring about the deck) three thousand. In all, a few more than thirty-seven hundred pearls she threaded about her person; and then slipped back into blouse and skirt before permitting herself a few hours of sleep. The diamond-studded clasps she wrapped in a bit of cloth and stuffed into her handbag.

THE Chinese maid woke her then, bringing food that had been cooked, she knew, in the brick stove up forward, where the crew slept. She could bring herself to eat but a few mouthfuls. This didn't matter, either. No hardship was of consequence in such a battle as hers; she would have submitted coolly to torture rather than surrender her prize. But it suggested fresh tactics. She had a knack at cooking. Quietly, later in the day—she knew better than to try effusive friendliness; to play herself to the last would be best—she spoke to Mr. Doane of that small gift. A kitchen was improvised in the lao-pan's cramped quarters, aft; and Miss Carmichael, quite intent about her business, coolly cheerful about it, indeed, began to prove her capacity. And she knew, then, that she was winning. They would soon be respecting her, even liking her. Even so, she would keep her distance; then they would have to keep theirs. That was all she needed.

VI

TO ROCKY, the most elusive memory of all this eventful night was the conversation with Miss Hui Fei. For she returned in a moment, so he remembered it, and sank wearily into the steamer chair. The picture of that scene was to vary bafflingly in his mind. At times he saw himself, torn with an emotion now so great that it seemed the end of life, standing over her, saying, passionately—

"I know how it looked—your finding us here like that! And you'd have reason. I did flirt with her. I'm ashamed now. I hadn't seen you—felt you—like this. But that's all over. I was telling her— Please! You've got to know!—that I love you. Or telling her enough. She understood. And she was awfully decent. She took my hand, wished me luck."

There must have been a brief time when the poor girl was endeavoring pleasantly to turn aside this torrent of heavily freighted words. Certainly he was talking feverishly on. And she was being—just that, pleasant. He could remember pulling down a coil of rope from the steersman's deck and sitting moodily beside her; and there was a sensation of their minds, his and hers, at cross-purposes. There was something about her, back of the weary smile—a smile that was long to haunt him, dim in the moonlight, exquisite in its sensitive beauty—that eluded his pressing desire, until it seemed near to driving him mad. Kipling's "East is East, and West is West," slipped in among his thoughts; kept coming and coming until it became a nerve-wracking singsong in his brain. He was terribly overstrung, of course. He knew that, even at the time, but was helpless to control himself. It was, it turned out to be, simply a madness that demanded being lived through.

There was one period, fortunately very short, when he seemed to be almost forcing a quarrel. Why, he couldn't afterward imagine. That part of it was dreadful in the retrospect. He had reached the point, apparently, when he couldn't longer endure the failure to reach her. There was simply no response. It was almost as if he were frightening her away. Perhaps it was just that.

But the most vivid memory was of the unaccountable force that suddenly rose in him, seizing on his tongue, his brain, his very nerves. The power of the Kanes was abruptly his, and it brought its own skill with it. It was, distinctly, a possession. It simply came, at this very top of his emotional pitch.

There must have been preliminaries. He must have said things that she must have answered. But these lesser moments dropped out. Even a day later, he could see, could almost feel, himself on one knee beside the steamer chair, saying those amazing things, without a shred of memory as to how he got there. Never had he so spoken, to girl or woman; for in the

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Smuggler's House

A Mystery Story

By J. Allan Dunn

THE rattletrap car came squeakingly to a halt and the driver shut off the chattering engine to make himself more easily heard.

"There's the house! Used to stand close to the edge of the cliff one time, lookin' out to sea across Windy Bay. That was the name of it on the old charts. Water, from below where we are, clear across to the spur of rocky ground yonder. Long afore my time. More'n a hundred years ago. Then the sand started to work in. Choked the sea an' nigh swallered the cliff."

Benson gazed across the waste of dunes. Some of the slopes were long, smooth drifts; others were rippled by the wind; tawny plumes of yellow sea-grass grew sparsely on the crests. Between the ancient headlands the sand had reclaimed the sea. Billows of sand replaced the waves that once had leaped in Windy Bay, formed with infinite persistence to a seemingly useless end: grain after grain, shifting, piling, year after year, choking the haven, forming a no-man's land between sea and shore.

He looked at the house, built of stone, grim, substantial, four-square, its seaward windows flaming with the afterglow, like deep-socketed eyes that glared defiance at the usurping sands. Where the dunes mounted now, salt-water had washed and roared and honeycombed the buried cliff. The conquering grit, carrying the cliff by slow assault, had marched up to the very lintel of the door, spreading a dun carpet where soft turf had grown, smothering the orchard that once bloomed and bore. The main trunks were buried; the higher boughs peeled, blanched and drained of life, protruded like the bleached antlers of mammoth elk, seeking resurrection.

"ROAD used to run down to the inlet," said the lean, garrulous driver, humped over his wheel. "There, where ye see the gully. Tide-water there, one time. An' a wharf. You'll pass the timbers of an old ship juttin' out of the sand on your way to the house. Cap'n Jarvis Harmon's brig. Gran'father to the present Cap'n Harmon.

"Set down as Harmon Inlet on the maps. It's him—the old cap'n—they say was in league with the smugglers an' pirates of them days. That's why they call it Smuggler's House. Silks and wines an' Spanish gold landed to that wharf many a time. False lights on the cliffs an' sutteranean passages, they tell. Ships ashore an' the wreckers carryin' up the flotsum-jetsum."

He smacked his lips with the tobacco stains at the corners and his eyes lit up with avarice.

"Nothin' goin' on like that nowadays. Can't even git a mug o' cider. The law's strict an' the law's carried out in Whitsands—prohibition to piracy. I'm constable. An' deputy-sheriff," he added as he turned back his unbuttoned vest and displayed a badge pinned to his suspenders.

"'Nother crick beyond the house. Windy Brook. Back in the hills it's a live stream with trout in it. Fillin' up fast at the shore end. I go up it once in a while to git bait at tidewater. You aimin' to stay awhile? I cu'd take you out after scrod."

"I'm going back to-morrow morning," said Benson. "Can you be here at ten?"

"Count on me. The cap'n, he don't have many visitors. Nor his housekeeper. Reckon you're a friend of his—or her?"

Benson did not answer as he stepped from the car, and the driver climbed peevishly down to crank his engine. The tinny vehicle chugged and rattled off as Benson started down the slope of what had been the southern headland of Windy Bay.

There was wind there yet, though the evening was calm, with the sea lapping gently along the verge of the sands. But little breezes stirred in the hollows where the faint track led, shifting the sand along the slopes with sudden spurts of sliding grains that sounded like quick whispers.

A plume of sepia smoke came from the main chimney of the house. As he passed the remains of the old wharf and the timbers of the brig, mounting the sharper pitch that led to the brow of the original cliff, the wind blew stronger, in intermittent puffs. Weatherwise, Benson sensed a change. The sky was piled with clouds that glowed and gloomed, streaming in pink and orange vapors, like smoke above a dying furnace, as the sunset faded. The breeze began to whistle through the ghastly branches of the dead orchard, whorls of sand rose in little dancing spirals before and about him. As he moved on into this desert it seemed to him that the spirit of the place began to grip him in a tragic, infinitely lonesome way. The wreck, the dry bones of the trees, the sands that seemed to be whispering and creeping behind him in the gathering dusk, assembling for a night assault against the man-made citadel of the house; all cast their spell upon him.

And when he suddenly came across a fence of posts and pickets, slanting, half-buried, like the headstone they enclosed; he shivered a little from an inward chill as he stopped to read the carven letters in the marble. They formed one word. One only, unless others lay beneath the sand—

RAMAYA

Ramaya? That was a name dimly familiar. The name of what? Here might be a memorial to some faithful dog. It was an eery place for a grave, yet, if it had been made while the orchard turf was still green and blossoms dripped upon it in the spring, with ripe fruit knocking on the door of death in the fall, with birds in the branches, it might have been a restful enough burial-place.

Ramaya? He rolled the syllables over on his tongue, then, with a feeling of being over-inquisitive, turned toward the door of the house. It was deeply inset, of solid wood and dignified proportion, bare of paint, pitted by the wind-flung grains of hard, sharp sand.

An iron knocker sounded sharply to his rap. While he waited, the wind hurled a spatter of sand at the panels as if to second his summons.

THE door opened to the gaunt figure of a woman in black, holding a lamp that flickered to a gust as Benson stepped inside the narrow hall, closing the door behind him, conscious that the wind was rising fast with the setting of the sun. He glimpsed white doors and mahogany. Ancient patterned paper showed starey on the walls. A tall clock ticked woodenly.

Benson was six feet but the gaunt woman topped him. Flesh and skin had shrunk upon the bony plates of her face and her eyes were almost white, the paleness accented by the fine black line about the opalescent iris. Her scanty hair, yellowish-white like flax, showed the pink of her scalp between the flattened wisps. And her neck, above the high neck of her sable gown, was all outstanding cords and deep hollows.

He announced himself and her lips parted with a sudden display of artificial teeth, a travesty in the aged face. The sight of that ghastly smile created in Benson a dislike of the woman that he knew was unfair. He tried to dismiss it as he followed her to the door at the end of the hall.

The room they entered was of noble proportions and ran the full width of the house. A fire leaped in the half-light beneath a Colonial fireplace of white wood, delicately carven with wreaths, upheld by fluted pilasters, inset with figured tiles. On a great table, beside a terrestrial globe, the model of a full-rigged ship rode on a strip of Batik cloth, its sails half-screening the fire from Benson. On the mantel was one ornament that riveted his attention as the woman passed on through a door in the paneled fireplace wall, toward the back of the house.

This was a carving in high relief, of greenish stone, nearly three feet in height; the figure of a dancing girl, barbaric, faulty of perspective but infinitely graceful,

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alluring. Benson knew what it was as he examined it more closely, fancying himself alone. He had seen such carvings in the crumbling walls of jungle temples in far-off Cambodia, he had seen such figures in the life in the palaces of Siamese princes —Apsaras—dancing girls of Angkor. The bas-relief aroused memories, it gave the room an added touch of romance, it fitted the occasion upon which he had come.

He took in other details. Books and magazines on the table and two branching candlesticks of brass. Weapons glinted on the walls, arranged in trophies, the flickering firelight brought out the palms, pagodas and mackaws upon a screen, pearl inlay winked from a high cabinet. Old mahogany reflected the light in polished bloom with twinkles of brass handles. The floor rugs were Chinese, of rare color and pattern.

Then he saw, deep caverned in a settle chair of black wood and leather, backed by another screen of gilded lacquer, gay with flowers and fruits, an old man asleep.

A strong face, framed by an abundance of coarse gray hair, finely, boldly featured, marked but not disfigured by storm and stress—not wholly from without, Benson fancied, as the changing firelight played tricks of expression on the sleeping mask. There was a strong jut of jaw under the long beard that lifted to the even rise of a massive chest. The lips were firmly closed. Age showed most in the high veining of the folded, powerful hands, at the purple tracery above the temples. A beak of a nose sprang out from bushy eyebrows, still holding traces of the black they once had been.

Here was a man, thought Benson, of stern, swift, certain judgments and unbending will. Once he had been burned almost black by sun and wind and he was still deeply bronzed. If the elder Captain Harmon had been the pirate that the driver of the tinny car had vaunted him, he must surely have looked like this descendant. Sudden and quick to quarrel, fierce in love and war. Suddenly the headstone with its single word came to the visitor's memory—Ramaya—a woman's name.

The fire danced in fluttering waves of green and violet along the driftwood logs. One broke in half upon the heavy andirons and a rush of sparks frisked up the chimney. The sleeper stirred and sighed, opening eyes that reflected the flare. He did not notice Benson. He muttered in his beard in a low tone that held a deep-sea quality, the volume of a muffled drum.

THEN he saw Benson as he turned slowly in his chair. His eyes widened. They were a tawny amber under upper lids that made a straight line above the full-pupiled orbs. They were the eyes of a sea-eagle, searching, dominant, and bottomless. They could be cruel as well as stern. He made no start—the ancient nerves were sound.

"Captain Harmon? I am Richard Benson."

The skipper rose slowly but without apparent effort, rose until his massive bulk, for all of one bowed shoulder, towered above that of his guest. There was more than nervous vigor to the grip of his hand. A great hound, haw-eyed and heavy-jowled, came out from the shadows between chair and screen and sniffed at the visitor, letting a hand rest at last upon the smooth dome of its skull as Benson scratched its ears. Captain Harmon, showing teeth big, sound and white, laughed.

"Ha!" he said. "Cæsar accepts you. You are welcome. You must pardon my dozing. Old custom reasserts itself. I sleep off and on. My housekeeper had orders not to disturb me. You'll sit down. We'll have lights, then supper and then our business."

He pulled a bellrope of heavy twisted cord and a bell tinkled at the back as Benson took the chair across the hearth, beside which he had already placed his grip. The housekeeper came gliding in. She lit the candles in the branching holders, drew down and lit a counterweighted hanging-lamp that swung in chains above the table, cleared one end of the board and spread it with a snowy cloth. From a mahogany cupboard she produced silver and glass and crystal and deftly set two places.

"Do you wish to go to your room, sir?" she asked Benson. "You are to have the one above the Captain's, in the southeast chamber, up-stairs."

"No, thank you. And never mind the grip. There are some things in it I may want. I'll carry it up when I go."

SHE glanced at him incuriously and went on with her preparations for the meal, passing silently in and out of the door. There were cutlets of broiled ham with poached eggs, creamed potatoes, hot biscuits, sweet butter, preserved quinces, honey, delicious coffee; all savory to Benson, too long used to city fare. But he ate almost alone.

"I lost my appetite," said Captain Harmon, "when I gave up the sea. And I have to be careful."

Benson eyed him more closely. "You don't seem much of an invalid," he ventured.

"All sound but my heart. And that is rotten. I'm more than twice your age, I fancy—and I've not been careful before, so I must be now. One reason I got you to come down. I read your book," he went on. "There's a lot of first-hand knowledge, and first-hand travel, I imagine, packed between those covers."

"I have traveled a good deal. I hope to travel more," said Benson. "I like first-handed information. I would rather collect personally then buy from owners, as a rule."

The captain showed a square, squat bottle. "Here is something that has traveled," he said. "I brought it over in the original of that ship. My ship. I built it, owned it. I'm ashore, but that ship is still sailing sound in the China Seas. Oak and teak outwear the flesh that molds them." He poured out curaçao into two acorn glasses where it sparkled like liquid aromatic gold. Then he pushed across a small chest of cloisonné where cheroots nestled in tea.

"I envy your trips-to-come," said the host and the envy showed in his voice, in the leaping flash of his eyes as he sipped the curaçao. "I did not grow old gracefully. No red-blooded man ever did. A swift life, well-packed, like the bag of a bee—there's your Browning for you—that, and a quick death.

"The lure of the jungle trail," he continued, choosing a cheroot carefully, "sea, jungle or land. It all grips to the end." Benson's glance went involuntarily to the bas-relief.

"You noticed that?" asked the captain. "So you've been to Siam, and you've seen the Apsaras. Eh, I saw thirty of them once in old King Norodon's palace. Thirty princesses of the blood royal, from girls of ten, with breasts like camellia buds, to gold-skinned virgins of fifteen. Under the silver lamps—they've got them wired for electricity now, I hear—under the lamps in tissue silks. Ruby-studded tiaras of gold, gold pinions shaped like dolphins' fins on their shoulders, crusty with gems. Sheaths of gold on thighs and loins, writhing under the lamps like shining serpents, posturing about the King of the Monkeys with his mask of gold. Eh—ah!"

In his eyes there showed the fire still smoldering in the ash of lusts long since burned out. His look was fixed on the carven Apsara.

Ramaya. That was a Siamese name, of course. It came to Benson in a flash. Here was a man of the strong breed who had lived and loved and still loved to live if only in retrospect. Ramaya, Apsara, princess of the blood royal. Had she been one of those thirty virgins? Had she worn the rubies he had come to value?

The dog got up from the hearth and walked to the door through which the housekeeper had served them. He barked at it twice and it opened to the touch of unseen fingers. Cæsar slipped through.

"His supper, before he goes on watch outside," explained the captain. "Now, if you will put another log on the hearth—for stooping is a bad business for me—and make yourself comfortable with your cheroot, we'll get down to business as soon as Mrs. Wood has cleared."

"I am frank to say, Mr. Benson," he said when the function was performed and they were alone, "that I had you looked up before I wrote to you. My lawyers tell me that you are responsible and honest. A rarer thing than most people think. You see, I have little idea of the real value of the stones."

BENSON laughed as he answered. "I copied your precaution. I did not wish to take an idle trip. You wrote that you preferred cash. It was unusual. I did not care to carry several thousand dollars in currency to a lonely spot without knowing something definite."

"I am sorry if I put you to unusual trouble. I am not sure that I want to sell any of the rubies. I do want to set my estate in order. A valve here is leaky." He touched his chest. "It bothers me. My will is made, save for some blank spaces that I would like to fill with amounts as specific as possible. I have not needed money for my running expenses. I have liked to keep the stones for their—associations.

"They are Siamese gems and, when you see them, you, as a connoisseur, a lover of jewels, will understand better. They are rich of color, crystals of blood, living blood, and in one of them a star shines, like the soul of the ruby, a beating pulse of light. But you shall see."

He rose and felt back of the metal frame that held the tiles of the fireplace in position. One of them came out into his hand and he set it on the mantel, groping with his right hand inside the cavity as if he twisted at a lever. There was a slight click and a section of the right-hand flattened column slid down part way into its

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base, disclosing an aperture several inches square. From this the captain took a small oblong box of black porcelain, or jet, or even obsidian, and laid it on the table. The lid rested closely upon a flange.

As he slowly lifted the cover, Benson held his breath at the rosy glow that shone from the little casket before the gems themselves became visible. Then Harmon pushed the box toward him and Benson gasped. Never had he seen such rubies, in such quantity and quality. Crystals of living blood. The phrase seemed cold and inadequate. The crossing, mingling play of radiance from their hearts diffused a light that was warm, exquisite crimson, transparent but with a shifting shimmer as of vapor. Under it the gems appeared to throb like living particles.

The general body-tone was an aurora red, the hue of the drop of blood that hangs from the beak of a dead pigeon. Captain Harmon picked up one stone delicately and laid it in Benson's palm. Its light was slightly milky, its surface convex and, in its center, like an enshrined spirit, trembled a six-rayed, luminous star.

"An asteria," said Benson almost reverentially as he watched the dancing change pulsing within the ruby corundum. "A star ruby."

He took a jeweler's monocle from his vest pocket and set it in his eye socket. Presently he set down the jewel carefully. "I will give you eight thousand dollars for that stone," he said. "Now. If I sell it, it will be for more, but that is a fair price."

"I do not doubt it, but that is the one stone I care least to sell. I accept your valuation. I will do more, I will give you an option of purchase at that sum when the gems are placed on sale. After—" he tapped his chest lightly. Suddenly his head went up, his heavy eyebrows joined and his eyes flashed golden as his deep voice challenged angrily.

"What does this mean, woman? You know I am not to be disturbed after supper!"

The housekeeper had entered, drifting like a shadow from a door leading to the room underneath the one specified as Benson's. She stood on the farside of the table, holding a candlestick, unmoved by the tirade of her employer.

SWIFTLY as a conjuror, Benson palmed the asteria, slid the lid on the box and shoved the thin stack of yellow-backed bills he had taken from his wallet under the shadow of the ship's hull. The woman showed no signs of having observed them or the cavities yawning in the fireplace. Later, Benson reflected that the canvas and rigging might well have hid them all from her.

"The oil did not come, sir," she said in a toneless voice that matched her pallid orbs. "There is none for Mr. Benson's lamp, so I brought him a candle." She set it down.

"One of these would have done as well, fool," rumbled the captain, watching her under his penthouse brows as she glided out, this time into the hall. "You moved quickly, Benson," he added with a note of approval. "I doubt if she saw anything. She has grown into something half mechanical of late. This place has few excitements to keep one young. Tut! What do you think of the rest of the stones?"

Benson finished his appraisal, working deftly, sorting the rubies into little fiery heaps, making notes in a small book.

"The lot should bring at least eighty thousand dollars," he said at last. "There are forty-one, all told. Ten of them in every way unusual. They may bring considerably more, according to the way they are marketed."

"Eh! Five thousand better than my guess. It is a satisfaction, if one has anything to leave, to know the approximate value of one's estate."

"You do not care to sell the asteria?"

"I think not. We will talk further tomorrow. I do not want you to have come down here just for your fee, if we can arrange anything. But—we will see. I should prefer not placing it upon the market myself. It is a whim."

Benson had a swift vision of the captain in the middle watches of the night, working the sliding column, gazing at the pool of cold fire in the deep hollow of his hand, seeing it in memories. A dream of posturing Asparas, of one central figure of Ramaya with the star ruby on her brow?

Harmon put away the gems as Benson replaced his bills in the wallet and put the wallet in his inside coat pocket. As he did so, he noticed how closely tile and column fitted. Even with knowledge of some such combination, luck rather than observation would have revealed them to the closest seeker.

The wind went suddenly swooping round the old house with a roar, dashing grit against the long windows to the north, enveloping the sturdy edifice in a spiral of eddying air. The flames on the hearth shuddered and leaped upward, the soft

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ashes shifted. From without, the howl of Caesar came faintly.

"He bays the moon," said the captain. "It will blow hard to-night. And it flings the sand. I trust it will not disturb you. If you care to sit up, there are the cheroots and the curaçao. And a book or magazine. If you will excuse me, I will leave you. I have some writing to do. You go back with Martin, I suppose. He drove you over?"

"He will be here at ten. He can wait, I imagine."

"It will not be necessary. We'll breakfast as usual. At eight."

The wind rushed again, mounting, circling, about the house. A gust roared in the throat of the chimney, fanned the fire to a spouting volcano, sending flaming flakes whirling out into the room, soaring far and fast. They settled on the Chinese rugs, burning smoldering rings. They pitched into the dried yellow canvas of the model ship and, instantly, sails and rigging were in a crackling blaze.

Benson looked for water, thought of flinging a rug, wheeled and ran for the kitchen through the door the housekeeper had used. The captain stared at the flaring ruin in wordless, actless horror, as if he had suddenly seen hell through a rift. Then he beat at the leaping, licking flames with his hands, scattering spars, trailing snakes of burning twine and scraps of smoldering tinder about the room. When Benson came back with a pot of water from the stove the stately model was a wreck and Harmon was stamping out spreading rings in the rugs. Benson helped him but the valuable weaves were badly damaged. The captain ignored them and stared stonily at the hull.

"So ends the day," he said as if to himself. Benson recognized the phrase as the that used by old-time skippers to close the record in their logs. "We had better put the guard in front of the fire," said Harmon, his voice calm, but Benson saw his hands tremble as he set the wire screen in place.

Benson turned, not to appear to notice the weakness. Somehow the destruction of the ship seemed symbolic, tragic. He looked up at the dismantled hull and he felt quite certain that he did not want to sit up with the wreck that had ridden so gallantly upon its Batik strip, next to the terrestrial globe. That has been a happy combination. Now the varnished surface of the globe was scorched and blistered. The portion principally injured showed the islands and peninsulas that ringed the China Sea, the Celebes Sea. And the ship that the captain had built had seemed so intimately a part of the captain and the captain's life. It would not have surprised Benson if he had been suddenly told the ship itself had foundered or been burned at sea—off Indo-China or Borneo.

ON THIS ship the captain had imported the curaçao, the rubies? Perhaps—? Benson stopped. The lettering on the stern had been shadowed by the canvas before that had burned. Now the gilt characters fairly caught his eye. And the name of the ship was—*Ramaya.*

He picked up his grip and his candle and turned to his host. Harmon looked dragged and tired. His eyes were dull.

"I think I shall turn in," said Benson. The skipper looked moodily at him.

"Well," he answered and then strode ahead through the hall to the foot of the staircase, opening his own door. There was a light within and Benson caught sight of a four-poster bed, valanced and canopied, an ancient desk. A gust of sand rattled on the front door like the rapping of a myriad tiny knuckles, insistent, imploring. The weird fancy touched Benson that they had come from the half-buried grave. The place and its happenings were getting on his nerves.

"Good night!" he said and started to ascend. Harmon stood watching him till he made the landing.

"The room above mine, Mr. Benson? I think you will find conveniences. Pardon me if I do not make certain of that myself. My mounting days are over. Good night!"

The resonance had gone out of his voice and he went heavily into his room and shut the door. Benson, on the landing, heard the wind moaning in the dead orchard, sweeping up from the dunes. There was a window on the cross landing, above the front door. Through it he made out the troubled wraith of a moon, struggling through a wrack of clouds.

HIS room was large, with three paneled doors of white, one the entrance, another opening to a closet beside a chimney with a stove hole, papered over; the third, ajar, leading to a room fitted with a table, a desk, an antique mirror above a bureau, chairs and hook-rugs; forming a sitting or dressing room to the little suite. His bedroom was furnished in much the same way, with the addition of a bed. The air was stuffy and he attempted to open a window. There were three of these, the frames opened and shut by metal slugs on springs, fitting into slots in the casements. These fastenings were supplemented by more modern catches.

The two windows to the east had their small panes badly blurred by the sand, and the wind rattled them. The south window, in the lee of the prevailing storms, was in better transparency and through it he caught a glimpse of the corner of the orchard, blanched under the moon. And he saw Cæsar, running with his nose at trail, following the ridge of a dune, disappearing beyond it. But he could not budge the windows, either in bed or sitting-room. They might have been nailed up, to judge by their resistance to his efforts; he gave up only when he threatened to disrupt the slender framing.

In the sitting-room he opened a second door that led to a passage running the full length of the house, as he judged. He noted an orange line of light beneath a door at the far end, across the passage. The housekeeper was still awake. It was not late. His watch showed the time to be a few minutes after ten.

Benson unstrapped his grip and took out some things. Then he undressed, placing coat and vest across the back of a bedside chair, and turned in. But not to sleep. The close room, the wind howling in the chimney, shaking the windows, buffeting the sturdy house until beams creaked and the rugs lifted mysteriously as if snakes were beneath them, combined with a feather-bed and the incidents of his visit to keep him wide awake. He tried reading a book by candlelight, but was unable to concentrate.

Darkness did not help him. Once Cæsar bayed, out on the dunes. The breakers sounded in the rising storm like distant artillery, the moon showed fitfully opalescent through the blurry windows, bringing out the pale woodwork of the doors. At last he fell into hazy dreams of rubies, Apsaras, a full-rigged ship that flamed like a volcano and sank at last to the final subsidence of consciousness.

He awoke with his senses thrilling to a still alarm. Not for nothing had he followed jungle trails and slept in the bush. There came a stealthy creak on the stairs. Not the wind. It sounded in a lull. He slid softly out of bed and slipped through the sitting-room and so to the passage.

The wind had risen again with redoubled fury after its pause. Sand pattered against the panes of the landing window, the glass rattled. Silhouetted against the milky light that came from without, Benson saw the figure of a man, stooping in the nervous tension of one who prowls in the night on forbidden ground. He saw vaguely the outline of a face, clean-shaven, hawklike. The crouching figure glided to the door of Benson's bedroom, tried the handle, turned it, opened the door inch by inch, swiftly, silently; then entered, with Benson gliding after.

The man advanced toward the bed, plain against the southern window. His bare feet showed upon the dark pattern of a hook-rug. He did not glance toward the bed, where Benson had thrust a pillow beneath the covers to suggest, in the darkness, a recumbent form; but reached out for the coat and vest that hung on the back of the bedside chair. This with his left hand. His right was close by his side. It suggested a weapon.

There was nothing of the coward about Benson. He had been in many straits that called for prompt action, and he answered his combatant impulse. Physically he was always fit, by birthright and by training.

TIPPED on his own bare feet, Benson took three quick strides and leaped. His left arm slid about the man's neck, his right hand caught the other's wrist and, in one coordination, his knee, upflung, formed a fulcrum at the back of the intruder's elbow while he applied leverage. The man twisted sideways to avoid the breaking of his arm, with a stifled oath at the unexpected attack and at the pain. Under the bruising, wrenching grip of Benson's fingers the weapon tinkled to the floor.

And then the hook-rug slid on the planking and they went down together. The man was supple, wiry, slippery as an eel, twining himself about Benson as they writhed, close-locked and desperate, fighting for possession of the knife. After the first thud of their fall they made but little noise but Benson expected any moment to hear the captain coming up the stairs. Not that he counted on it or had time to do anything but try to subdue his assailant, who was fighting with a desperate frenzy.

Benson still clung to the wrist, trying to get a lock. The other forced it close to his mouth and tried to sink his teeth into the tendons of Benson's wrist. They touched the flesh but before they could snap and close, Benson, with a burst of strength, let loose his grip and smashed at the other's jaw. As he dodged, snarling and panting,

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like a beast, Benson saw his chance and kicked the haft of the weapon, a knife, sending it beneath the bed.

With a convulsive heave the man bridged himself in wrestler's fashion and, his knees helping, strove to throw Benson over his head. They smashed into the chair and it toppled. The clothes came down, the brass candlestick fell with a thump beside the book Benson had been reading. In a flash the other grasped the heavy candlestick and beat up with it at Benson's face. One blow got home, gashing his eyebrow so that the blood started. Then, as always with Benson, something snapped within him. Neither coolness nor judgment, but a measure of restraint that sometimes served and sometimes handicapped him. He buried his head in his opponent's face, careless of the flailing blows, he got astride of him, forcing down the left arm and grinding his knee into the biceps. And his right hand found the other's neck, sought and compressed the leaping artery, boring with a relentless thumb while his fingers clutched the nape. The movement was swift and sure as the outcoil of a snake: a trick learned from a Chinese compradore, merciless, agonizing, capable of administering death.

THE man's feet drummed on the floor as pain and nausea swept over him and he wilted, unconscious.

Benson picked him up and laid him on the bed. He took the long straps from his suitcase and trussed him securely. Then he lit the candle, restored the chair and fished up the weapon. It was a Malay kris, with curving, double-edged blade, a stabbing knife from one of the trophies on the living-room wall. He stood with it in one hand, the candlestick in the other, gazing down at the marauder, his pajama-coat torn, blood on the sleeve, blood on his face, on the rug; breathing heavily. It had not lasted long but it had been no child's play. Yet it had apparently alarmed no one.

The chap was a sailor, from his clothes, his bare feet tanned, like the rest of his exposed flesh. He was in shapeless blue-serge trousers, salt-stained and wrinkled. A blue flannel shirt was belted into them. An anchor was tattooed on the right wrist. Benson had seen that as he had bound him, with a girl's name above it, partly erased—Lucy.

The face was not unhandsome, with a reckless look even in unconsciousness. The chin was stubborn rather than determined, the lips thin, the forehead low and the eyes close together.

They opened as Benson, who had rapidly flung on some clothes and mopped the blood from his forehead, bent over the bed searching the man. His first thought was that he might have been followed from Whitesands, his errand guessed as one to do with money, perhaps ready cash. That had happened once before. His second idea was the rubies.

He found nothing. The man wore a singlet under his shirt. The three garments, with the belt, constituted his clothing. The wide bottoms of his trousers were damp and sandy. The pockets gave up only a few small coins and a bunch of rusty keys. Benson felt a sense of relief. Apparently the man was only a common thief.

He held the candle closer to the face and the pupils of the eyes dilated and then shrank to pinpoints. Their look was defiant. In the life they imparted to his face it seemed to Benson vaguely familiar.

"What were you after?" demanded Benson. "Who put you up to this?"

The man stared back sullenly.

"Won't talk, eh? We'll see about that." He picked up the kris. "I can charge you with attempted murder, besides robbery."

The eyes changed at sight of the weapon. They became cunning. "You were too quick for me, boss, with that ju-jutsu stuff. But I wasn't meanin' to use that sticker. I had it for a bluff. I'm not chuckin' myself at the Chair. I come up the back stairs first an' I butted in the wrong room. There was an old dame in it. I had to tie her up. If you don't want her to choke to death you'd better ease her up a bit or you may be 'sessory to murder yourself. I was a bit rough, bein' in a hurry."

His volubility showed bravado, Benson thought, behind which lurked a certain strain. For which the gagged housekeeper might well be the reason. After tying her he had gone down the back-stairs and up the front way, rather than risk the long length of creaky passage.

Benson examined the bonds carefully, tightened a strap, took the candle and went down the passage to where he had seen the strip of orange light. Still outside, he heard a curious, gobbling moan and hurried inside just as the dog howled again, a long drawn ululation that cut through the uproar of the wind. The swift question of how the man had passed Cæsar came to him before the sight on the bed dismissed it.

With hands fastened behind her back, her bony ankles tied with cord, a towel over her mouth, the gaunt figure of the housekeeper tossed in her nightgown of flannel, Her knees were drawn up so that the pans showed sharply under the drag of the long gown, caught by the binding of her ankles. The thin ridge of the shins was visible. She looked more like a skeleton than ever. Her pale eyes rolled wildly and fearfully in the candlelight. The gag was formed of the towel and a handkerchief, stuffed between her toothless jaws. She made queer choking noises as he relieved her. A glass stood on a little table with her false teeth soaking in water.

Benson removed them gingerly, rinsed the glass with water from the pitcher on a marble-topped chamber-stand and refilled it, assisting her to drink.

SHE took a swallow or two and clutched for her teeth, turning away while she clicked them into place, then grasped at Benson's arm.

"The man," she gasped. "You're wounded! Did you kill him?"

"No," he soothed. "He's bound in my room."

"You've got him? He's still alive?" Her voice was shrill with terror. Her fishy eyes stared at him as if she could not grasp his meanings.

"Yes. You're all right. I'm going down-stairs. You'd better get dressed. It must be close to morning."

"The dog!" she cried. "Listen to Cæsar."

"I hear him. On the fellow's scent. After he let him pass."

"He came—in the dark. He choked me. I—Oh, my God!"

Benson looked at her sharply. "You get some clothes on," he said crisply. "The man's safe. "You're not hurt?"

"No. Only faintish. I'll be all right."

Her eyes rolled after him as he left, going down the back way to the kitchen. He noticed that the back door of the house was locked and bolted. A lamp was on the kitchen-table and he lit that and carried it into the living-room and through it to the hall. Cæsar was baying incessantly outside the front door, scratching imperatively for admission. The skipper's door was ajar. With a sudden premonition of greater tragedy Benson unshot two bolts and opened the door, shielding the lamp behind it. The wind swept in, forcing him back with the weight of the gale against the stout panels. He heard the roar of the surf and saw the graying light outside as Cæsar leaped in, jaws open and slavering, his ruff lifted, bounding past Benson as he shut the door with some difficulty; half crouching, snuffing at the bottom of Harmon's door and then flinging back his head to a bell note that echoed dolefully through the house.

The door was not locked. The lamp showed the great bed with the captain lying, one arm outside the rumpled quilt. His eyes were open, they caught the light. But there was no life in them. There was blood dabbled on the end of the great beard. The hilt of a dagger, shagreen and silver-mounted, showed where it had been deep-driven to the heart that had failed at last, not to disease, but to the stroke of an assassin.

THERE was no need to test for pulse. Captain Jarvis Harmon was dead. There seemed to have been no struggle. He had been stabbed in his sleep with devilish swiftness and sureness. One pillow was misplaced as if search had been made for valuables. In the hall the big clock ticked woodenly on. The dog had its forepaws on the bed and was licking the cold hand of its master, its haw-eyes turned to Benson as if in entreaty for vengeance.

Fierce anger against the cold-eyed devil up-stairs flamed in Benson. He did not touch bed nor weapon. That was a job for the coroner or the sheriff. He rushed up-stairs struggling with a desire to take punishment in his own hands. On the threshold of his room he halted in dismay.

The room was empty. The grip straps lay on the floor. Benson's wallet, rifled, lay on the bed. He put down the lamp and jumped to the windows. The catches were all set. In both rooms. He raced down the hall in apprehension of more tragedy, marveling how the man had escaped from the stout straps. The woman's door was half open, as he left it. She lay on the bed, still in her nightgown, arms extended, her eyes blank, rolled upward. But she seemed unhurt.

He dashed water in her face and she revived, sighed and thrust up her turtle's neck with her skull face palsied on its corded column.

"Eh?" she cried. "What's this?"

"Get up, woman. Murder's been done! The man's gone. Did you see him?"

"Murder?"

"Captain Harmon! Stabbed by the man I bound. And he's got away."

She sat up, raising herself by her arms.

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Her face worked horribly and her pallid eyes projected as she strove for speech. It came thickly, with sweat starting over her forehead. "Cap'n Harmon murdered! Oh, my God. *Oh, my God!*" She rocked herself to and fro, her wispy hair all about her face and shoulders. Benson shook her, none too gently.

"Get up and come down," he called to her. "I'm going to search the house."

With a sudden gathering of forces she sprang from the bed and began to don petticoat and skirt over her nightgown, regardless of Benson, who was examining the window. It was partly open but over it had been tacked some netting against insects. This was intact. He passed from room to room up-stairs, six of them in all, but, with the one exception, all the windows were locked or jammed. There had been no egress that way.

The kitchen door was still bolted. In the living-room he saw what he had missed before, the tile misplaced, the column yawning, the black casket, that had held the rubies, empty on the table. Yet he had searched the man for the gems.

The long windows were locked. So were those of the room opposite the dead man's chamber. There were two casements in the skipper's room and they too were fastened from within. The front door he had rebolted and the locks were still close-socketed. There was a double mystery here. How had the man got in, as well as out?

He thought of the cellar, opening from the kitchen. It was divided into three by fieldstone partitions, doors between. These had been supplemented by square brick piers. And there were the bases of two chimneys. The smell of apples, a litter of boxes, cordwood, barrels, but no sign of the fugitive. Three oblong lights, gray now with dawn, would barely have given egress to the dog. And they were nailed.

A trap caught his eye and he tugged fiercely at it, remembering the driver's tale of subterranean passages. But stale, stinking water gleamed iridescently up at him less than two feet down. If this was a passage it was impassable. It was more likely a well. Man and rubies had vanished. Houdini-like, he had got out of the stout straps and, like a greater wizard, he had disappeared, with every exit barred!

A COLD fury took possession of Benson. His own loss—ten thousand dollars in currency—entered into it, but predominant was the foul murder of Captain Harmon and the manner in which the assassin had tricked him. The rubies were no slight matter, aside from their great value. That such gems should pass into hands so dastardly exasperated him and clinched the determination to solve the mystery, to bring the murderer and thief to book.

Once more he went swiftly but carefully over the house, noting several things, fitting them together with certain incidents but, though they furnished him with a theory, they gave him no actual clue as to how the man had entered nor, what was of prime importance, how he had got clear—in which direction he had fled. The housekeeper had passed him in the living-room, walking like a fantom of death herself, her face seamed with emotion, toward the death chamber where the dog still kept guard beside the clay that had once been his master.

If the man had got clear of the house—it seemed certain that he was not within it—he might have left traces. The wind, still blowing a gale in the graying dawn, would have eliminated footprints to a great extent with the scudding sand, yet in some sheltered hollow of a dune he might find the imprint of a naked foot. On the lee side of the house they should show, if he had gone that way.

He entered the death chamber. The woman had touched nothing but stood beside the bed wringing her hands, her spare frame shaken. Benson warned her to leave the bed alone. He opened the desk, searching for some better weapon than the two krises that had been taken from the wall, now sacred to the law. He saw a folded paper lying there and, with one glance at the back of the woman, a second at its contents, placed it in his pocket. In places the ink showed fresh as if the dead man had written after Benson had retired. He had so expressed his intention, Benson remembered.

IN A pigeon-hole he saw the butt of a revolver protruding and he took it out. It was of heavy caliber and fully loaded. If the old man had kept it under his pillow—but Benson dismissed that thought, the blow had been too quick, the attack too stealthy. Harmon had died in his sleep.

With the pistol in his hand he unbolted the front door and went out. The wind blew so strongly that he was hard put to it to advance. He leaned his weight against the strength of it while he shielded his face with one crooked arm from the flying grains. Then it momentarily slackened. Across an angry sea, tumbling at cross-purposes, a streak of pale yellow split the wrack of clouds, wan herald of the day. And he saw a schooner plunging under shortened staysail and main in a three-point reef, holding up in the wind. He wondered why it did not beat out to open sea and then, the salty gusts clearing his brain, he realized purpose in its holding on to such a perilous course. It was waiting for some one.

He glanced to right and left. On the left must lie the creek that the driver had mentioned as still partly navigable for shallow draft. If the murderer was connected with this schooner, hanging on in the mouth of the snarling storm, he had come by boat. And he would so return, if a boat could live in that criss-cross of shifting pyramids, yeasty with foam, topped by spume flying parallel like snow in a blizzard.

A shout came faintly to him and he began to run across the dunes, to his left. Suddenly a figure showed, climbing out of a valley between hills, a man in blue trousers and shirt, surely his quarry. He was a fair hundred yards ahead, too far for range of the pistol. And he, too, ran fast on his bare feet. He topped a dune and disappeared as Benson labored through the dragging sand and fought the gusts that sometimes held him stopped, his laboring lungs seeming to be blown bare of air.

He reached the dune where the man had vanished and found himself looking down upon ebbing waters of the creek. The wind lashed at the stream and, favored by the tide, fighting the gale, he saw a dory with one man laboring at the oars and another in the stern.

Benson ran along the dunes that bordered the creek, gaining a little. The rower saw him and redoubled his efforts. Benson stopped and fired but the pace had unsteadied him and the bullet went wide and short, spurting up the water. He tried a second without effect. The windage was hard to judge and counteract; the creek was widening to an estuary and the dory hugged the opposite shore. In a lull it shot ahead as Benson raced down to water-level, firing again, uselessly. The two were out of range and he could only watch them as the dory struggled across the turmoil of the bar and started across the wider turbulence of the waves that threatened every instant to engulf it.

The man in the stern put out a steering oar in the notch and strove to keep the boat head on. Now they were hidden in a valley, now tossed up a heaving slope, clawing a way with frantic strokes, making some progress, the rower skilful at his task.

A man appeared at the rail of the schooner and shouted something out of cupped hands. Benson caught a wind-shredded remnant of the shout and guessed at its call for haste. Though he fancied the wind was lessening, the waves were mounting perceptibly, rolling in from beneath the widening streak of yellow and every second increased the hazard of the schooner if she hoped to clear the shallow crescent of Windy Bay and work out past the reefs that marked the almost vanished headlands.

ON THE wet shingle Benson stood impotent, drenched, watching the struggling dory. He saw it turn broadside to a rearing wave, saw the steering oar snap and a roaring mass of water engulf the little craft, pounding it viciously, smashing it, striking with the weight of tons of raging sea. A bobbing head—an upflung hand, a last glimpse of wreckage—and the certain end had come.

He stood fixed, strained against the wind and saw the schooner fall off a little, then come up, with figures on deck staring where the dory had been. Then she fell off again and, not daring to ease her sheets, her canvas hard as a board, began to sidle her way close-hauled, seaward, making dangerous leeway till she tacked, came about handsomely and buffeted her way out of her extremity. Inch by inch, foot by foot, she clung to the wind as a man might haul himself along a rope, gaining little by little, seeking her own safety, relinquishing the two men to the death that had already claimed them, swashing them about in the sub-currents, to fling them up at the flood, battered, sodden, broken husks.

Benson turned away, the gun still tight in his grip. His efforts at recall, at punishment, had been futile as the petty anger of a child. And he had other things to do. The bodies might come ashore somewhere on that rockbound coast, but the murder was yet to be reported, the question of the rubies settled. For he did not think they were taken with the men in the dory. The shadow of the tragedy had deepened, though he fancied he dimly saw a trail in the wild tangle of the night's events.

Above him, on a dune, her strange hair streaming, her clothes whipped about her bony frame in a thousand convolutions, her pallid eyes gazing wildly out to sea, her lips moving above the gleam of her ridiculous teeth, stood the housekeeper, her

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Suddenly a figure showed, climbing out of a valley between hills, a man in blue trousers and shirt, surely his quarry.

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features in such a wild twist of frenzy, of unutterable woe, that Benson's impulse to go to her was checked. But he mounted and touched her on the shoulder. She turned to him, pointing to the tumbling fury of the waves that beat upon the shingle and sent spray sprouting inland, to fly in spindrift flakes above the dunes; greeting him with a maniacal laugh—

"So ends the day! So ends the day! But we will wait—wait until the sea gives up its dead."

She clawed at him wildly when he would have led her away.

A hail barely reached him. He turned to see a tall man coming over the dunes from the road's end, leaning against the gusts, a hand on his hat, the spare folds of his clothing lashing out. A stouter figure toiled behind. With relief, Benson recognized the driver of the car—Martin—deputy sheriff and constable.

Martin caught at him for balance as he reached him, gasping for breath, his Adam's apple working as he strove for speech, his eyes shifting from the woman to the schooner, laboring hard to gain an offing. Once they turned suspiciously to Benson.

"She'll make it," he cried at last. "She'll make it! Dad burn 'em but they can handle her! It's the *Miriam!* Old Job Bollard, runnin' in from the storm, sighted her foolin' about in the bay here at daybreak. Thought she might be tryin' to land a cargo. Rum-runner she is. Contraband. Why in time they put in so close here beats me. She'll fetch it, sure. Look at her scoon, will ye?"

Benson saw the *Miriam* come about for a short tack, then fetch another and go lunging past the point in a smother of spray.

"Sheriff," he said, "you are the man that's needed. There's been murder done. Captain Harmon has been stabbed. Valuable jewels have been stolen. Ten thousand dollars of mine has gone with them."

Both men opened their mouths as their eyes goggled. The wind blew away the half formulated "Murder?" that formed on their lips.

"Then what in time are you and the woman standin' here watchin' the schooner fur?" demanded Martin. He had taken a visible brace. His loose-jointed frame coordinated into something authoritative, his eyes became keen. Benson approved his new aspect. The man had qualities, after all. His companion seemed of duller clay, awed, swollen with curiosity, yet stolid.

"I BELIEVE the man came off from the schooner. Two men tried to make her in a dory from the creek and were drowned. One of them is, I think, the murderer."

"I want to know." Martin scrutinized the shore line and the breakers. "Body'll be comin' in before long," he said. "Both of 'em. Land this side of the p'int. Strong current sets in. Nothin' doin' till tide turns. Davis, you stay here an' keep an eye out for 'em. I'm going up to the house.

"What's come to her?" he went on, looking at the housekeeper, who had hunkered down atop the dune, her eyes searching the waves.

"We need her at the house," said Benson. The deputy sheriff looked sharply at him, caught some special meaning and sucked in his lips. Then he tapped the woman on the shoulder.

"You come back to the house along of me, Mrs. Woods," he said. "I want to have a talk with you."

She stared at him blankly. Her eyes gleamed like pale opals that suddenly reflect the light. Then they became stony. But she rose. Martin took her by the arm, and though she stiffened she seemed suddenly to resign herself and went back between Benson and Martin, with head erect and lips firmly pressed together, though her scant bosom rose and fell as unevenly as the warring seas. They entered the house. Benson told some details as they walked and Martin looked once into the room where the captain lay, the dog beside him, which growled at Martin and then subsided.

"Nothin' teched?" asked Martin. "Good. We'll send for the medical examiner. Acts as coroner up here," he explained to Benson as the three of them went into the living-room. Martin led the woman to a chair and motioned Benson to another.

"NOW then," he said, his eyes alert. "Suppose you tell me the whole story as you come into it, Mr. Benson." As the latter talked, the sheriff fingered the empty casket and peered into the cavities in the fireplace. He glanced at the spaces in the trophy from which the krises had been taken, but said nothing until Benson stopped talking.

"You got anything to add to that?" he challenged the woman. She sat gazing at the ruins of the ship. Silent, rigid.

"Funny how he got clear of them straps," he continued. "Funny about them bolts. You got any theory, mister?" His eyes, no longer merely inquisitive, but official, sounded Benson's. Apparently he expected an answer.

"The man got past the dog," said Benson. "He was let into the house. Let loose. Mrs. Woods, what time did your son come to this house last night?"

The sheriff whistled softly. The woman started to her feet, her look wild, shocked into galvanic action out of her repression.

"My son? Who says it was my son? My God!"

"You lied last night, Mrs. Woods," went on Benson. "You said there was no oil for my lamp. The can in the kitchen is half full. You made that an excuse to spy on the captain and myself. And the man I caught in my room had your eyes. There were other things about him that struck me."

"Stop!" she cried, in a croaking, choking voice. "Stop, I say!"

"She has got a boy," said Martin. "He warn't no good. Cap'n kicked him out five years back for stealin'. Loose bills, it was. Wouldn't prosecute. Said he'd thrashed him. You'd better talk out, Mrs. Woods. 'Pears you're mixed up some in this yourself. An' your boy, if it was your boy, is——"

"Drowned," she wailed. "Drowned. But he didn't know. I swear it."

She stopped suddenly, glancing at them, at Benson's hard face and the Yankee's keen features and accusing eyes. Then, her arm outflung to the figure of the Apsara on the mantel, she faced them.

"I'll talk," she said. "I'll talk. Let the world know what I have kept until my heart was caked. She—the wanton. And him, cruel and cold, seeking his own lusts, denying his own flesh and blood, forsaking me. Cruel and cold, a lying, crafty devil!" She shifted her gesture to the door that led to the dead man's chamber. The floodgates of her speech were open, her eyes reckless.

"Lizzie Woods, I was. A beauty once. No puny thing like her. His housekeeper and his mistress. Strong I was, with a will of my own, but he was stronger. And I loved his mastery. He would have married me, but for her. Though he broke his oath as a man might break twigs, yet he would have married me and righted me. But he brought her back, thirty long years ago, in that ship that sits scorched there, a forewarning of the hell that has opened for him.

"And when I told him of the child that was coming, he laughed at me and said 'twas none of his. He had broken me by then, after five years, as he broke her. I've watched her sitting in the sun, looking out to sea, and smiled to see her pine away for her hot, green land and look to him for the caress he had tired of giving, as he did with me.

"Aye, I laid her out at last. I watched him dig her grave and carve the stone. Perhaps he loved her. He brought no more light-of-loves to Windy Bay. And the hardness of him shelled about him. He drove away my boy. His own son. And I, the broken fool, stayed on.

"For what? To get the inheritance for my boy. It was his. His and mine. I hoped that Harmon might grow less hard. I tended him. And he left the sea. His heart failed him, drained of its strength by wanton living. He saw the sand creep on as it has always done, to kill the orchard and to cover the shame of her grave. But I was his cast-off, his slave. And I could have had a dozen proud to wed me once."

Martin nodded confirmation at Benson. It was difficult to believe that beauty once bloomed on that warped and dessicated vine. But her voice rang with truth.

"I DID not spy," she said, turning on Benson. "I but made sure. I have watched him many a night in front of the fire, looking at his rubies. At my rubies. My boy's. They may have been hers, once. She gave him—all—all—to his mastery. A man like him is born as woman's master. To make a mock of them. But they belonged to my boy, since he would not give him a name. None knew of them but me. Sometimes he would look at me and laugh, and I knew he was figuring to fool me at the end.

"I guessed why you had come. I read the Sunday paper where he first learned of you. He took the supplement to his room and I found it. I read your book when he was out, walking the cliffs with the fog. I knew when he wrote you, when you would come. And the luck went against him. For I had a letter from my boy and I knew he would be coming yesterday, as he has sometimes come before. Wild he was, with his father's blood in him. Wild with my wildness. But my boy.

"I told him of the rubies. Of the money you had brought. He had paid the schooner to bring him here and set him off.

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He meant to take some of his own. Could I blame him, knowing his father's treacherous heart? I knew the trick of the fireplace, watching him from the hall doorway in the night, trying it when he was out.

"But he wanted the money. Most of all he needed money. The rubies he dared not sell. What more is there to tell?" She dropped her arms heavily, the life seemed to suddenly wane in her. But she regathered force.

"I did not know he had killed. I swear it. And he—ah, God!—he did not know that he had killed his father."

"You never told him?" asked Benson.

"Would I tell him his own shame? He thought my husband—his father—dead. Long ago."

"Yet he was willin' to take the jewels and the money," said Martin.

"One thing more," said Benson. "You let him into the house. You undid the straps while I was down-stairs and then pretended to have swooned. How did he get away?"

"The cupboards," she said faintly, clutching at the table. "The cupboards between your sitting-room and the next. There is a space between, with a sliding panel. It leads to a chute—with a ladder. It leads down to one of the piers in the cellar. It is hollow. There is an old passage leading to the ruined wharf and the creek. He went that way. Now let me go."

"Your son had no right to this man's money," said Martin.

"I thought he had paid it to the captain for a stone. I thought it was in the mantel—or beneath the captain's pillow. And I could not stop him after I had told him. It would have been sent back, from the sale of the rubies."

"Where are the rubies?" asked Martin.

"Under the mattress on my bed. I was to keep them for a while. I—look!" she shrilled.

THROUGH the window they saw figures approaching the house, slowly. Two groups each carrying something that sagged—and dripped.

She broke from them, rushing through the hall, out through the door, where the stolid Davis, at a nod from Martin, trailed her as she went to meet her son.

"Likely'll have your notes in his pocket, if the sea ain't washed 'em out," said Martin. "Better look after them rubies. She's implicated, of course, but—" He looked, uncertainly, at Benson.

"You haven't guessed all of it, Martin," said Benson. "Look at this." He took from his pocket the paper he had taken from the captain's desk. "This is Harmon's will. He wrote in it last night, after I had appraised his jewels: There are a few bequests and, listen:"

"To my housekeeper, Mrs. Eliza Woods, in recognition of her years of service and in recompense for certain wrongs she has suffered at my hands; to her and to her issue after her, I bequeath the sum of sixty thousand dollars, to be derived from the sale of my rubies this day appraised."

The sheriff stared dumbly at Benson for a moment. "He left 'em to her after all. If that don't beat all. I want to know."

The front door opened. The heavy tread of men sounded, the broken sobbing of a woman, of a mother. From the dead man's room the dog suddenly howled. The door to the living-room opened. The sun, breaking through the clouds, sent level rays through outer door and passage, across the living-room of Smuggler's House. The beam touched the shriveled masts of the ship and rested on the face of the Apsara.

California Poppies

By Nancy Barr Mavity

I WAS lonely for the mighty towers of Manhattan,
For the black gulfs of her ancient streets by night,
For the twining lights that loop the Avenue,
For Artemis in her eternal lonely grace
Poised against the sky above Madison Square.

I was lonely for the wild sonorous crashing
Of a million feet, a million hooves, a million wheels,
For the impersonal unheeding crowds
Thronging the night and day on hidden errands.

And then—I came to a hill
Where wild poppies blow;
Where the sun had fallen and broken
Into a million shining fragments
That lay scattered on the grass.
They crowded upon me with their beauty;
They stormed my heart with their light.
I pressed my face to the ground,
But still they blazed around me.

And now I know that if I went to Manhattan
I should be forever lonely,
Haunted by the silent glory
Of wild poppies.

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"Man, you has been sent to me straight from heb'n!"

As Handsome Does

By Willett Stockard

A SERIOUS and densely colored individual known as George Washington Smith, otherwise "Wash," sat leaning against a post of the railroad stock-pens on the edge of town. A passing freight-train slackened its speed, and from the side door of a box car there appeared a negro, who alighted. He alighted simultaneously, it might almost be said, striking the ground upon nearly every part of his body but his feet. He ceased tumbling about the landscape after a time, and came to rest within a few paces of the spot from which Wash was viewing his unconventional antics with dispassionate interest.

"Have you got the makin's, brother?" Wash asked calmly, when finally convinced that the newcomer had arrived at a definite stop.

The latter sat up, rubbed his eyes and shook some sand out of his wool. He was groggy and stared at Smith blankly. Wash, noting his dazed condition, essayed another greeting:

"Welcome to our city, stranger."

"Ma name is Edguh," announced the stranger, still trying to rub the dizziness out of his eyes. "Befo' Ah was big enough to have a name, ma folks called me Lunkhead."

Smith, who had been regarding the other's face attentively, nodded his head at this information, accepting it without betrayal of any surprise whatsoever, and repeated his previous question: "Have you got the makin's?"

"No," responded Edguh, *né* Lunkhead. "How does you stand with folks in this heah town?"

"You mean with white folks?" countered Wash. "Not very well."

"Ah mean with cullud people."

"Not very well," Wash repeated frankly.

"You seem to be plumb unanimous," commented Edguh. "The reason Ah ask is because Ah thought maybe you might could square me fo' a meal or two somewheres in town."

"You ain't got no chewin' about you, Ah reckon," persisted Smith, and as the other shook his head Wash went on: "Why, you ain't got nuthin' much, is you? What's yo' vocation?"

"What's ma which?"

"What do you follow fo' a livelihood?"

The stranger appeared to give the question extensive consideration before making answer. "No," he said finally.

Wash discontinued his scrutiny, picked up a week-old paper he had read and discarded some minutes before and reread a brief item in it. Suddenly he sat upright. He had been seized with a brilliant inspiration, which showed in his eyes and his changed attitude, transforming him into a different person. He clapped his hands once or twice, and turned again to his newly-formed acquaintance.

"Man, you has been sent to me straight from heb'n!" he exclaimed.

"Maybe, maybe," ventured the other noncommittally, "an' Ah ain't et nuthin' to speak of in nigh fo' days now."

"Oh, that's all right," Wash assured him airily. "Don't you worry none about that. The main thing is do you reckon

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you kin manage to scrape along that way fo' a while longer?"

"Not if Ah kin manage to do any other way," Lunkhead replied.

"If you could only get along some way without havin' to show up in town fo' a few days an' jest give me a chance to get ma plans all laid—oh, man!" Wash continued in an alluring manner. "Say, what could you do to a big fat possum, cooked whole, with gravy an' trimmin's an' everything?"

"Ah could inhale it through a straw," Lunkhead declared, his enthusiasm kindling.

"Well, you jest join me in this plan Ah got, an' that's what you'll be doin' befo' a week."

"It ain't necessary fo' me to do without eatin' till then, is it?" inquired Edguh.

"Oh, mebbe not," Smith conceded. "Ah'll do the best Ah kin fo' you, but it's necessary fo' us not to be seen together, an' in fact fo' you not to be seen at all till Ah gets a few days to work out ma plans, so till then you'll have to stay hid out in the country somewheres around heah, or else maybe you'd better jest back up the road to the last town you passed through on yo' way heah."

"That's about eight miles back," Lunkhead mentioned dryly. "Say, what is this plan of yo's—besides havin' me hidin' round fo' days without eatin' or else backin' up eight miles through the country?"

"Well, Ah'll tell you," began Smith. "By trade, Ah'm a travelin' preachah, but the war done put me out of business."

"That's goin' some," interposed Lunkhead ambiguously.

"When times was dull," Wash went on, "Ah could always start a revival or somethin' an' pick up a little easy coin, but most every smoke you meet nowadays is workin' fo' the Jones Company's plant in town, an' when a nigger's got plenty of coin he kin pretty near always find excitement enough without havin' to go to a meetin' fo' it, so Ah got discouraged an' give up, an' afterward Ah gets caught tryin' to make an honest dollar by runnin' in a pair of tops in a crap game, an' now it seems Ah have jest nacherly lost out with both sides, you might say, the elect an' the sinners. Ah was jest a-settin' heah puzzlin' about what kin Ah do to make a few dimes absolutely any way on earth without havin' to work fo' 'em, when heah you come a-bouncin' along an' gives me the notion."

HE AROSE, and although nobody was in sight, he drew Edguh a short distance aside and made known the great idea to him in a whisper. When the gist of the scheme was finally understood by Lunkhead, he was favorably impressed with it. He was disposed to demur at the necessity of returning to the next town, but allowed himself to be prevailed upon by Wash's superior arguments and dominating personality.

So after being given a light lunch, which Smith luckily succeeded in obtaining for him from a former inamorata, he crawled upon the gunnels of another freight-train and departed in the direction from which he had come. There he was to remain for a week, getting along as best he could, even though compelled to work. Then on the evening of a specified date he was to return and meet Wash secretly at the stockpens for further instructions.

Having dispatched Lunkhead on his way, Wash promptly began upon the execution of his own part of the affair. He went off to the shack of a prominent negro employee of the Jones plant, one Beef Hope, who in answer to the call came out to his yard fence where Smith waited in the gathering dusk. Beef showed some distrust when he recognized his visitor, which increased at the humble, ingratiating tone in which the latter started the conversation.

"Mistuh Hope, Ah ain't got many frien's heah," he began in a deprecatory manner.

"That's a fact," Beef readily agreed.

"You're one of the mighty few that has ever done anything much fo' me," Wash pursued.

BEEF made no comment, possibly trying to recall the occasion upon which he had inadvertently rendered Smith a favor.

"An' this is the first time Ah have had a chance to pay you back fo' you kindness."

"How much is you figgerin' it's a-goin' to cost me?" asked the chary Mistuh Hope, still regarding his caller with suspicion.

"Nuthin' at all," Smith hastened to reassure him. "The only thing Ah ask of you is to keep it a secret. Ah frequently does little deeds of kindness in secret. Not long ago Ah does a kind act fo' a cullud travelin' gentleman who had got hisself flipped off a freight-train goin' through heah, an' he appreciated it so much he wanted to do somethin' fo' me. He give me some information which would have been a lot of benefit to me if Ah had been in a position to use it, which Ah ain't, but Ah thinks about you, Mistuh Hope, the very furst thing."

He drew from his pocket the old paper he had been reading just prior to his meeting with Lunkhead, and handed it to the other, indicating a marked paragraph; and having his curiosity touched, Beef took it nearer the light shining from his window and read the account, which ran:

> A new method of distributing the usual Christmas bonus was tried last year by an Eastern manufacturing company. . The premiums given its employees varied widely but not according to a percentage of wages or length of services, and the employees were greatly puzzled over the matter until the mystery was recently cleared up. It was remembered that shortly before the holidays a poorly dressed man went through the entire plant seeking alms, and it now develops that those who turned a deaf ear to his appeal received the minimum amount of the bonus, while the more charitable were rewarded in proportion to their generosity. The plan is said to have been originated by the wife of one of the company's officials, a woman widely known for her benevolent work.

Hope completed a laborious perusal of the indicated item, and returned the paper with an inquiring look.

"Ah don't know if you understands it or not, but that's a new plan to encourage charity in general," explained Wash. "A po'ly dressed man will go through a place beggin' an' keepin' tab on what he gets an' who gives it to him. If you don't give him nothin', you is out of luck fo' the next bonus, but if you is nice to him an' say a few kind words an' then slips him a couple of bucks—oh, man, you is certainly fixed good fo' yo' Christmas money! Of course, a workin' man ain't supposed to know all about this, but it's a scheme that's goin' to be tried this year by factories all over the country. This fellow Ah helped was engaged by a number of 'em to go through their places beggin' an' then make a report. That's the reason he looked like a bum an' was travelin' by hand at the time."

"Yo' frien' ain't worked this place yet, is he?" Beef inquired with visible interest and some anxiety.

"No, he was jest passin' through heah—or tryin' to, rather—when Ah meets him an' he went on afterward, but he told me he was coming back to work this town some time next week. 'Most anybody workin' fo' the Jones Company an' knowin' about all this befo'hand could do a great deal of good fo' hisself, an' Ah trusts you to keep it a secret, Mistuh Hope, because Ah don't think it's right fo' me to let anybody in on it, except you an' maybe one or two mo'."

"That's right," Beef hastened to agree; "only if yo' frien' told you that confidentially, it 'pears to me it would be doin' him wrong fo' you to tell anybody else about it at all."

Beef's attitude toward the other showed a complete change, and he threw an arm across Wash's shoulder and spoke to him with great solicitude.

"Is you eatin' reg'lar these days, Wash?"

"Ah is missin' meals much mo' reg'lar than Ah eat 'em," Smith confessed with a sigh.

AFTER a few weak protests he allowed Hope to force a half dollar upon him. Then he hastened off to call on other Jones's employees, with the same tale and pretty much the same results—first enlisting interest, then conquering antagonism and finally winning their confidence.

During the next few days he succeeded in seeing the Jones Company's entire colored personnel, seeking out each one when he could do so unobserved and trusting each to keep the secret for selfish reasons. And although Smith insisted that he himself had no ulterior motive in disseminating his information—and indeed was expecting no immediate returns—he nevertheless was the recipient of various small tokens of appreciation, amounting in all to several dollars.

But what meant far more to him, he found himself speedily rehabilitated in the estimation of a host of acquaintances formerly turned against him. Many of them openly recalled his good qualities—not an involved memory feat; there were frequent references to his undisputed ability as an exhorter; and he was even invited to lend his time and eloquence to the local campaign for raising funds for a negro memorial.

Then on the evening previously designated he and Lunkhead met at their trysting place, the cattle-pens, Lunkhead arriving as usual by freight; and the final part of their scheme was put into operation upon the following afternoon—which was pay-day at the Jones plant.

On his way home from work that evening Beef Hope was accosted by a forlorn individual—for Lunkhead fitted well in the rôle he was called upon to play, who begged for a nickel.

"Ah works fo' ma money—go get you a

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job," growled Beef, momentarily forgetful of Wash's recent confidence.

But he recalled it instantly, and his manner changed with suspicious rapidity—in fact, he barely saved himself from offering the supplicant an apology. "You look to me like a deservin' man," he said instead. "Heah's a dollah fo' you—heah's another dollah an' fo' bits, makin' two dollahs an' fo' bits in all."

Lunkhead was so overcome by the amount, the largest sum of money he had handled in a long time, that he was forgetful of the demands of his part, and had to be reminded of them by his benefactor.

"Ma name is Beef Hope, in case you might want to remember it, or anything," mentioned that individual, when he saw that Lunkhead was departing without further remarks. "Ah am well known in the Jones shops, where Ah has worked steady now fo' fifteen months an' three weeks."

From Hope Lunkhead went to others on the descriptive list that Wash had given him. He was a diligent worker, at least upon his present assignment, was Lunkhead, and in the days that followed he was especially active, although the work was of a slow nature, necessarily long drawn-out. In so far as possible, he did not wish his various transactions to be seen or generally known. Such sudden and unprecedented liberality upon the part of everybody might arouse suspicion. But the results justified his pains. Every negro approached readily gave from one to three or four dollars, and each evening Lunkhead sneaked off to the stock-pens and turned in an encouraging report and the money to Wash, who in turn furnished him with the list of the morrow's prospective benefactors, with brief information as to their appearance and habitat.

BUT at all times the two were careful not to be seen together or even in the same vicinity. This caused some inconvenience, since both were engaged in work requiring more or less going about among the public. For Wash had now become one of the men most actively employed in the Colored Memorial Fund campaign.

As a matter of fact, it was Wash who was responsible for its beginning some weeks before. Speculating one day upon the large amount of money in circulation among the negroes and how he could most easily obtain a share of it, he decided upon a subscription for some public enterprise. After considering several possibilities, he settled upon a memorial in honor of former negro soldiers from the community as the best excuse for such a subscription. He did not take the trouble to determine the sort of memorial to be erected—that was a mere detail—the main issue being how much profit would accrue to him as the originator of the affair.

So he prepared and put into circulation a list headed by his name opposite a promise to donate ten dollars. He was far from possessing ten dollars then, but was of the opinion that he could easily spare that amount shortly, in case the project met with the success it deserved.

That, however, was the difficulty—it was too successful.

Money was more plentiful than ever before. The community was patriotic, and it was proud of the record of its soldiers. The suggestion of a memorial struck everybody as most laudable. Wash's vague ideas were enlarged upon. Instead of a monument, it was decided to erect a building as a kind of club, library and general meeting-place, thus making a practical as well as a fitting memorial for former soldiers of their race.

The most influential and highly respected representatives of the colored quarter, headed by venerable Old Man Bates, were so carried away with the plan that they took the matter out of Wash's control before he had the opportunity to handle any of the money. And as a finishing insult, he was even asked for the ten dollars he had subscribed.

So it spoke well for Wash's progress in the graces of the neighborhood that he was again allowed to participate in the campaign, even though not called upon to come in contact with the collections. Still he had hopes, and in the meantime he was content to devote most of his energy to the final drive for funds. A large amount had been paid in, and nearly as much more was expected from the big mass meeting to be held the next Saturday evening. So confident of the success of the meeting was Wash that he spurred Lunkhead to more rapid work, in order to garner as much as possible before the meeting drew forth all surplus money.

Lunkhead did all that could be expected of him. He succeeded in seeing every man to whom Wash referred him, and the collections, less the necessary expenses of himself and Wash, amounted to about two hundred dollars, all of which had been converted into bills. Upon the date of the mass meeting, he met Wash in the early evening as usual, and turned in his daily gathering.

"Did you look up all of them last five names Ah give you?" Wash asked.

"All but three of 'em," Lunkhead replied, grinning. "They done come lookin' me up."

Wash verified the amount, added it to that already collected and then gave the entire roll to Lunkhead.

"Ah am goin' to take a prominent part in that to-do to-night," he explained; "jest how prominent Ah can't say. Ah am to speak, an' whether Ah am to be allowed to get ma hands on any of the collection is still indef'nite, but in case Ah does an' anything happens an' Ah has to stand a search, why, Ah don't want this heah roll found on me."

Lunkhead nodded his approval of this precautionary measure, and accepted the money.

"AH'LL keep away from the meetin' maself," he said in an excess of prudence.

"No, Ah trusts you puffectly, Lunkhead, an' Ah lets you keep the roll for a while, but don't ask too much," returned Wash promptly. "Besides, Ah wants to show you who Ah is an' jest what Ah kin do when Ah turns myself loose. You be on hand in the back of the congregation, an' then as soon as the meetin' is over, you an' me will meet around behind the buildin' an' decide what we'll do an' where we'll go with all this money. Two hundred dollars—oh, man!"

Together they wended their way toward the meeting-place, while they discussed what they were going to do with the money and Wash dilated upon his ability as an exhorter.

"Jest once let me get them smokes to listen to me, an' Ah kin play on their feelin's with the touch of a master's hand upon a grand organ," he boasted. "In the old days when Ah used to hold religious revivals, why, Ah wouldn't have to preach half a dozen rounds befo' Ah would have them sinners down on their hands an' knees prayin' fo' fo'giveness as loud as they could yell. Ah wasn't no bum at takin' up collections, neither, even in them days, an' Ah figure the folks to-night will think their own frien's is as good as them foreign cannibals Ah used to collect money fo'. You know old Picayune Taylor?"

"THAT ol' skinflint that lends money fo' a hundred puh cent. puh week?"

"Yep, that's him. He's still got a dollah an' fo' bits of the first dollah he ever made, but he's got a boy who won a medal in the war that Ah was talkin' with him about to-day, an' it wouldn't surprise me much if he give me as much as five or even ten dollahs to-night. Oh, man! This is goin' to be some meetin', an' Ah am goin' to make the grandes' effut of ma whole life."

They arrived at the meeting-house. Wash was careful to remain without until Lunkhead entered and seated himself near the rear. Then Wash went in and took his place upon the rostrum.

The meeting was called to order by Old Man Bates, and proceeded according to arrangements. A few brief speeches were made, and the amounts previously subscribed were announced. The chief address immediately before the call for donations was to have been made by Old Man Bates, but a cold interfered, and it was his substitute, George Washington Smith, who arose and faced the hushed throng.

He stood gazing at the faces before him for a moment of silence, confident of himself and his power. Now no matter what might be said of Wash in general there could be no denying that he was genuinely endowed with the ability to move an emotional flock. He was not far wrong in his own estimate of his gifts. So long as he could get members of his kind to listen to him, he could play upon them at will. And this evening he had the unequivocal interest and sympathy of his entire audience.

"Ma frien's," he began, "our boys may be cullud, but thank Gawd that culluh ain't yellow!"

A burst of applause stimulated him to the exactly proper degree, and he plunged eloquently ahead, sweeping his listeners along with him. Murmurs of approbation arose as he continued—venerable "amens" and now and then a more juvenile "You says it." Under Wash's skilful manipulation, enthusiasm increased steadily, and when he reached the conclusion in a flight of eloquence he had the assemblage astir with emotion and eagerness to give to the limit.

"Don't give till it hurts," he begged modestly. "Jest give all you got!"

Three of the most prosperous negroes were on their feet even before he had finished. One, a representative of a well-to-do colored firm which had done more than well of late, stated that his firm would increase its donations fifty dollars. Old Man Bates said in a hoarse voice that he had given all he could afford, but would give fifty dollars more anyway, and then

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"Mah frien's, our boys may be cullud, but thank God that culluh ain't yellow."

to the amazement of all, that rare individual among the negroes, a miser, old Picayune Taylor, announced painfully that he would give fifty dollars.

The sudden and unprecedented generosity upon the part of Picayune was sensational in the extreme. Wash accepted it and the accompanying roar of applause as an exquisite tribute to himself and his genius. He was thrilled, madly intoxicated with pride and joy, and was stirred to an additional outburst of oratory, one such as he had never before attempted, such as none present had ever heard before. He reached a climax of eloquence which startled even himself, and his audience to a man was in a state of emotionalism akin to the wildest religious frenzy.

"Give everything you got!" he screamed, his arms outstretched. "Somebody give another fifty dollahs—give a hundred dollahs—is there anybody who kin give mo' than that? Who'll be the next?"

"Ah will!" shouted back a manly voice in the rear. "Two hundred dollahs mo'!"

Out in the aisle waving a roll of bills stood Lunkhead, every line of his features expressing the intense emotion aroused by Wash's masterly efforts.

"Two hundred dollahs mo'," he repeated at the top of his voice.

Wash cast a horrified look in his direction, and remained transfixed for a time, staring before him in a sort of stupor, his eyes and mouth opened to their widest extent. Then his knees wilted and he sank weakly into a chair. But his collapse passed unnoticed, for Lunkhead was the center of all attention and the hero of the moment.

Old Man Bates accepted the money in person, and others crowded about him, men and women, striving to shake his hand.

In the meanwhile Wash slowly collected himself as he realized fully what had occurred and all it meant to him. Gone was his enthusiasm, and gone all his interest in the meeting as well. He stepped from the platform, and made his way down the aisle until he halted before Lunkhead.

At that individual he gazed long and earnestly, and then in a voice awful in the intensity of feeling it concealed, he announced:

"Yo' folks suttenly must have believed in the principle of handsome is as handsome does when they named you Lunkhead!"

In the March EVERYBODY'S

HUGH MacNAIR KAHLER—"The Playboy" is a very up-to-the-moment story of a young man whose participation in the two worlds of amateur golf and modern business is extraordinarily life-like and absorbing. It is the sort of story that will make a very satisfying appeal to readers who enjoy romance interwoven with familiar aspects of contemporary life.

RUTH MURRAY UNDERHILL—Tony Breckinridge, youthful millionaire, never worked a day in his life until he fell in love with Jane Connors, stenographer. Then he had to buckle down and apply himself—or lose Jane. That was the beginning of a friendly rivalry that develops into an exciting business race in "Atalanta-Jane."

L. H. ROBBINS—The Society of Arts and Sciences has selected the humorous story, "Professor Todd's Used Car," which appeared in EVERYBODY'S for July, as one of the stories from which prize-winners of the O. Henry Memorial Award for 1920 will be chosen. Another of Mr. Robbins's humorous stories, "Betty's Painter," will appear in next month's EVERYBODY'S.

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UNDER THE SPREADING CHESTNUT TREE

A MAN, who hitherto had lived in San Francisco, moved to Los Angeles and bought a bungalow, determined to enjoy the sunshine of the southland.

One day, after he had been a resident in southern California for about six months, he met a friend from San Francisco.

"Well, how do you like it in Los Angeles?" asked the friend.

"All right. But the darn rats are eating me out of house and home."

"Why don't you get 'em some rat biscuit?" volunteered his friend.

"I'll get 'em nothing," he replied savagely. "They'll eat what I eat!"

A NEW YORK business man, after suffering a series of annoying interruptions caused by the entrance in quick succession of porter, towel-supply man and window-cleaner, turned for relief to the telephone.

"Gimme Rector 56771!" he bawled.

He waited patiently for five minutes, then hung up the receiver in disgust. Immediately the bell rang.

"Are you finished?" the operator asked sweetly.

The subscriber grunted. "Whatsermatter," he growled, "want to sweep off the wire?"

A DELEGATION visited the candidate at his country home. He met them with hat and coat off, overalls on, mopping his brow.

"Ah," he said. "Glad to see you. But I'm very busy putting hay in just now. Come down to the barn and we'll talk things over while I work."

Down to the barn hustled the political candidate and the delegation.

The nominee seized a pitchfork and—but where was the hay?

"John," he shouted. "John, where's all the hay?"

"Sorry, sir," came the reply from the loft, "but I ain't had time yet to throw it back since you threw it up for yesterday's delegation."

A LITTLE kindergarten boy was attempting to tell the rest of his class what a caterpillar was like. He said, "He's long and slim. He's just like a muff out walking."

EDITOR'S NOTE—Though the sign is the Chestnut Tree, no story is barred by its youth. We will gladly pay for available ones. Address all manuscripts to "The Chestnut Tree," enclosing stamped, addressed envelope.

THROUGHOUT the trial the Englishman, whose crimes had been many and black, bore himself with an air of complete indifference and received the sentence of the supreme penalty with a bored yawn. After he had been led on to the scaffold and just as the hood and noose were about to be placed over his head, the attendant priest, still persisting in his attempts to awaken penitence, in spite of the doomed man's deafness to his prayers, asked him again for a final statement.

The prisoner's gaze wandered to the noose and rested there meditatively. Suddenly he turned to the priest:

"See here, old chap," he demanded, "is this thing perfectly safe?"

TWO weary travelers were plodding through the mud in the hills of Kentucky searching for the cabin of one Silas Goodell. They stopped at a cross-road to inquire the way and were informed that the cabin was about a mile down the road. After walking what seemed to be two miles they again made inquiry and again were directed "about a mile farther." After this had occurred twice more, the pedestrains each time being informed that the cabin was "nigh onto a mile farther," one turned to the other with the remark:

"Well, Cal, thank God we're holding our own!"

HALF-WAY up the steep hill the stage-coach stopped. For the seventh time the driver climbed down from his seat and opened and slammed the rear door.

"What do you do that for?" asked a passenger, whose curiosity had got the better of him.

"Sh-h; spake aisy. Don't let th' mare 'ear yer," cautioned the driver. "Every toime she 'ears th' door shut she thinks some one has got down, and it starrts 'er up quicker loike."

AN OLD Irish laborer walked into the luxurious studio of an artist and asked for money to obtain a meal, saying that he had been sick and was too weak to work. The artist gave him a quarter, and then seeing possibilities for a sketch in the poor fellow said:

"I'll give you half a dollar if you will let me paint you."

"Sure," said the man. "That's an easy way to make money, but—I'm wonderin' how I'd get it off afterward."

A CONSTRUCTION gang was working on a section of the railroad where the mud was excessively deep. The boss was resting in a shanty near by when suddenly he heard a workman shout:

"Queek, queek, bringa da peek, bringa da shove', Antonio stuck in da mud!"

And the boss, making a megaphone of his hands, shouted back:

"How far in?"

"Up to hees knees."

"Well, then let him walk out," the boss replied disgustedly.

"Oh, but he canna no walk, he wronga end up!"

A SCOTCHMAN had been presented with a pint flask of rare old Scotch whisky. He was walking briskly along the road toward home, when along came a Ford which he did not sidestep quite in time. It threw him down and hurt his leg quite badly. He got up and limped down the road. Suddenly he noticed that something warm and wet was trickling down his leg.

"Oh, God," he groaned, "I hope that's blood!"

AN ELDERLY rancher took some fine Kentucky horses to the West in the early sixties. He was proud of them, and justly so. The old gentleman's son had once seen a teamster lock one of his wagon-wheels in going down a declivity. This precaution appealed to the young fellow's idea of "safety first." He duly reported the occurrence to his father, and begged him to get a lock-chain.

"My son," said the old gentleman, "if I ever send you out with a team that can't outrun the wagon, let 'em go to hell."

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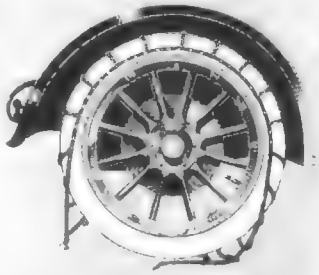
Practice putting on WEED Tire Chains in the Garage

It only takes a few moments to attach them when you know how. No jack required. Study the directions, illustrated on the right.

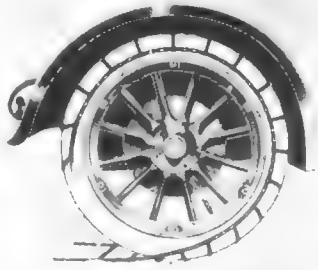
If you have never followed our instructions for attaching Weed Tire Chains, packed with every pair, you probably have fumbled around, got hot under the collar and falsely accused them of being a nuisance. Learn how easy it is to put Weed Chains on correctly—*practice in the garage* and instruct your wife, your sister or your daughter. It will repay you in security, satisfaction and comfort.

Weed Chains are also made to meet the demand for an efficient traction and anti-skid device for trucks equipped with single and dual solid tires or with the very large pneumatic tires. They are so constructed that they satisfactorily meet the requirements of heavy truck service in mud, sand or snow.

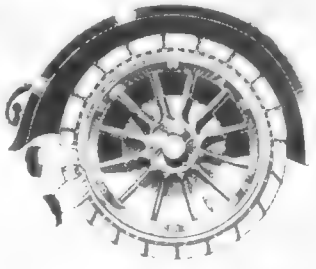
Observe these three fundamentals



Lay chains over wheel with hooks toward rear and tuck the slack under front part of wheel.



Start car forward just enough to run over slack ends.



Hook chains as tightly as possible by hand.

Do Not Anchor

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"A Clean Tooth Never Decays"

Always Sold in a Yellow Box

Brush Your Upper Teeth Downward and Your Lower Teeth Upward

The SINGER of the NIGHT

(Continued from page 11)

Perhaps last week upon a street. Who can posit the paths of a soul?—especially in these days of reversal—reversal."

His last words came in a hush, as though approaching things hardly to be spoken; from beneath his lowered lid his eyes, in a deliberate theatricalness, gleamed in long slits of light.

What it was all about Vallator could not imagine. Probably one of them was insane and the circumstances all pointed to himself as that one. Certainly there was some tremendous influence back of this fellow; his immunity from the common lot of these days proved that. Hovering there in the blue-lit darkness he looked some kind of human orchid; a detached, hectic sort of creature who sucked nourishment in some miasma of war which was poisoning all the world.

"AND now we meet again in this night-ridden corner of an obscure planet," mused the other, still holding Vallator with his gaze. Then he shot a sudden, somber question, "Well, what is it that you want of me?"

"I want nothing," Vallator exclaimed.

"Then you are a strange man," the other returned in a harsh amusement. "The only one in years who has approached me without seeking something for his own wretched carcass. If you only knew what they will ask of those who they think may have the power to grant! Small wonder that I have no longer any faith in humanity. But then, you do not know who I am, as yet."

His mood changed again and he spoke in a chill of sharpness. "Well, what word did she send me? 'Yes'—or 'no'?"

The moment for answer could no longer be delayed, but Vallator had a clue to that word now. Hastily he thought of that distant woman, unconscious of this unauthorized messenger binding her to a decision. His first sight of her, at the beginning of the war; still a bride, still very much the daughter of Peter Cray of New York, still regarding it all as a so t of high adventure. Then again on the day when she had so unknowingly aided his escape from the detention camp. A woman now, worn and saddened by four years of war, but with a whiter beauty, as though those fires had eaten away the shell of mere girlish prettiness and exposed the spirit beneath.

"Yes"—or "no"? To which should he bind her? There was something so irrevocable about a woman's "yes." He boldly swung the hazard of his choice.

"It is 'no.'"

Over the other's face passed a quiver of passion, like the ripple on some dark pool as a hidden creature might stir in its depths.

"So she still pins her faith to that impotent cross on her sleeve," he sneered. "The same symbol she once hoped to pin to mine."

"The same to which is pinned the faith of the whole world to-day," Vallator hotly returned.

"Exactly, and a thing pinned is a thing nailed, even as the one who upraised it was nailed."

The other fell to pacing to and fro again, his words coming harsh and sharp with a ring of arrogance in them.

"You people always defeat yourselves. Here is Ella d'Abrantez, the self-appointed angel of mercy itself. I ask her, in the name of mercy, to send a message to the American people, a message of the plain truth as it is known to her and all the Allied governments. The truth of how exhausted we are in materials and spirit both, of how near to inevitable disaster. And I promise her that the day that that message is published there will come from the enemy a generous offer of peace."

"There can be no peace while that menace remains in the world," said Vallator.

"For what is it that we fight?"

"For peace, of course."

"And yet, when peace is offered, we are to say 'no,' and go on fighting, knowing that it means the death agonies of millions more? Oh, you people; nailed, nailed to your crimson cross."

He changed again, subtly, swiftly, his hand falling on Vallator's arm in an appeal of question.

"What is it that so sustains you strange people? Even with the iron hand about your throats you still manage to croak your pitiful words of 'mercy' and 'right.' False, all of it, and yet there is something back of you. If I only knew where it is that I have met you before."

To Vallator it was all still a whirl of mystification and he glanced about, seeking some stable thing as a rest for his mind, but the wan plain held no light for him. Whence was it that came that sense of a familiarity with this fellow? In Paris? So many strange opportunities of meeting in that seething city. But this seemed something different. A vague recollection of just such a darkness as was now about them; a blue-black darkness, peopled with toiling shapes who struggled at desperate tasks, taking no heed of each other. He felt that he was being played upon by deliberate mysteries, encoiled in arguments; that that white hand on his arm and the subtle mind of this strange creature were seeking to mold him, ready to dazzle with promises or steer with suggestions of possible disaster.

STRANDED in his ignorance, with the pit of self-betrayal on either side, silence was his only safety, and as he stood there stiffly unresponsive, a snarl of anger crept into the other's voice.

"To think that she dares to send me a 'no' when she knows all that it means, both to herself and the world."

He recovered himself, flinging away Vallator's arm in a shatter of metallic laughter.

"Go on, dream your dreams, but I say to you that in a week the enemy will be bombarding Paris."

There was conviction back of his words. To Vallator this chance interview was as though he had entered, by a narrow cleft, into some dark cavern which kept opening out into fresh stretches of mysterious immensity. The beginning of it had been simple, but now he was caught in a sense of tremendous facts lurking behind it. He wondered what he might have done

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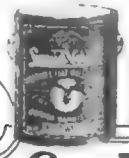

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by that 'no' fabricated out of nothing to save himself. If he could only even guess at what it might be all about."

"Perhaps Madame d'Abrantez may reconsider," he pleaded. "Give her a little time—such an important matter."

"Time is the one thing we can not afford," the other replied. "But since so much is at stake—she is at Grex, is she not? I am on my way to Nice. In a week I shall be returning. I will meet you at—at—" He hesitated, then went on with a laugh. "Since madame seems to have a liking for picturesque *rendezvous*, suppose we say at the statue of Notre Dame de Grex. There must be no writing nor attempt to communicate with me. A week from to-night. Until then I will hold off the consequences of her insolent answer."

"And if it is still 'no'?" asked Vallator.

"Be assured that those consequences will inevitably fall upon her."

"Fall upon a woman?" Vallator asked, and the reply came steel cold:

"Women? If you knew them as I do! And what is she doing now but sending men to death because of a hysterical sentiment of 'right'? How did you come here—have you a car?" he concluded suddenly.

'No, I came another way," Vallator evaded.

"THEN it will save time if you come with me. I pass within ten miles of Grex and you could be with the Duchess by morning."

He moved toward the car and Vallator hesitated, half eager, half in doubt. In what fresh mess of entanglements might acceptance not land him? But then again, to be at Grex by dawn, seventy miles nearer that frontier of safety. He was already moving when a word floated on his ears.

"*Monsieur l'Américain.*"

It was that singing girl, more than half forgotten in the stress of this interview. She was standing just outside the door of the inn, full in the bar of yellow light streaming out into the darkness. A quaint creature she looked, in her powder-puff skirts, but after the spell and mystery of the stranger's words she struck an appeal of warm, understandable humanity.

By contrast to her, in Vallator's heated imagination, that rat-bodied, steaming car seemed suddenly an actual creature of potential evil, and he drew back with the haste of a sleep-walker who wakes to find himself on a high edge.

"I will stay here. I have things to attend to," he said and the stranger laughed again as he looked at Régine.

"Pardon me, I had not understood that I was interrupting. As I said, you people always defeat yourselves. There are those of the greatest in France who would be glad to ride with me in these days, but you have *les affaires*. Adieu, then," he continued, seating himself. "And remind Madame d'Abrantez that her refusal will mean that she not only brings disaster to both her countries, but also the blackest public disgrace upon herself. From that there will be no appeal."

With a roar the car shot off and up the road, like some great cold-eyed rodent eating its way into the night. There came a touch on Vallator's arm and Régine was beside him.

"Monsieur is not angry with me for coming?"

Vallator laughed drearily. Angry? He felt as though he would never again be anything so positive; all he seemed capable of was bewilderment.

"I had to come," Régine went on. "I was afraid for you. There is always danger where that man is."

"Who on earth is he?"

"Is it possible that monsieur does not know him?" she echoed.

"I know that I have met him, seen him," Vallator answered. "But who he is or where it was I can't remember."

"But of a certainty everybody knows Ibn Geburah."

Ibn Geburah. The name rang in Vallator's ears with a crackle of explanation, a wonder that he had not thought of it before.

Ibn Geburah; the Rasputin of France, the very high priest of that involute mess of Parisian charlatanism yclept "the Occult." A squirming mess that, mostly unpleasant.

Ibn Geburah, the self-styled "Prince Noir." Reputedly the son of a Spanish gipsy, the possessor of a seemingly inexhaustible wealth, he had somehow shot upward to a point where it was rumored that he held the reputations of half Paris in his grasp. There had been a thousand stories current of him in those days before the war. Stories of strange powers of prophecy; stories that his wealth was the result of a mysterious physical alchemy that transmuted base metals to gold, stories of strange practises by which men and women of high station, crazed by the desire for money and power, sought to attain that same faculty. Rumors of strange morals, of midnight rituals in his fantastic house near the Étoile, which was thronged night and day by members of that hectic, before-the-war society flocking to forbidden things for a new sensation.

Ibn Geburah and the Duchess d'Abrantez? What possible connection could there be between this *soi-disant* Black Prince of the Reversed Cross and the American woman of mercy? Vallator thrilled like a setter as he seemed to catch a thread of significance through it all. Had it not been for Ella d'Abrantez he would never have gone to the front. It had been her ringing speech as she recruited for the American Ambulance Corps which had sent him there. Equally had it not been for her he would be still behind the barbed wire of the detention camp. And here he was entangled in her most intimate affairs, and all equally unknown to herself.

"WHAT have I done?" he asked of Régine. "He asked me for a word from the Duchess, and I told him that word was 'no'."

"*Eh bien?* That is a good thing for a woman to say," she nodded. "It is what I always say myself—though you do not quite believe that, perhaps?" Then, seeing he was engrossed with his own question, she went on: "Besides, in this case it was plainly what she meant to say."

"But how do you know that?"

"Because, *mon chopin*, she has sent no real messenger here to-night."

It was the first ray of comfort and he caught at it. Chance on chance; an unreal messenger delivering a real message. A determination sprang to his lips.

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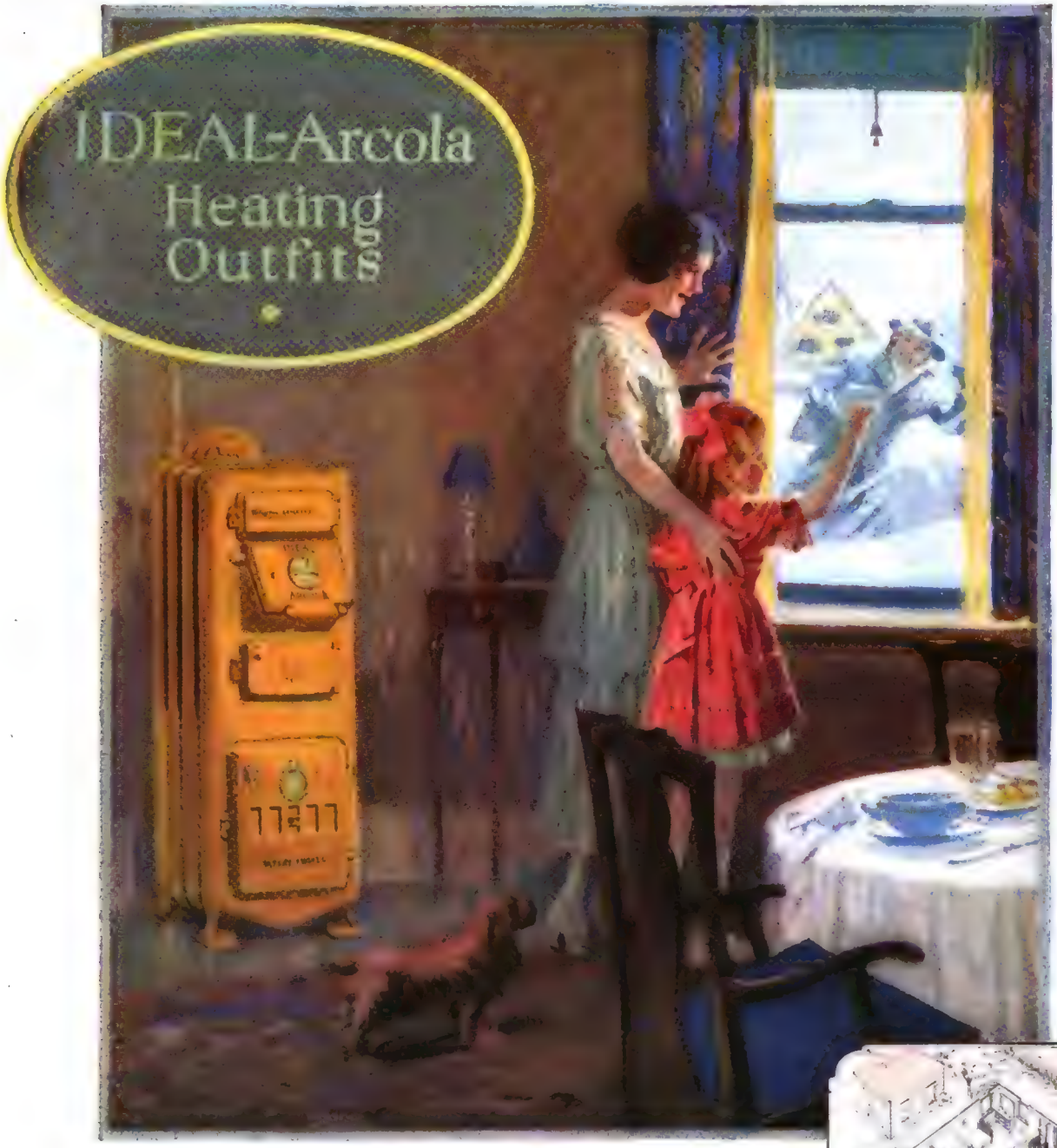

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"I must go to Madame d'Abrantez and tell her what I have done."

"There will be danger for you in that," warned Régine.

"What is danger beside such a woman as that?" Vallator returned, his gaze faintly luminous as of one who sees a vision. "If you have ever seen her—so high, so unstained by all these terrible days."

"I have never heard that those who are mixed in the affairs of Monsieur Ibn Geburah remained unstained," she retorted drily.

"YOU can perhaps hardly understand such a woman," he said, with a noble gentleness, at which she hid a smile.

"No indeed; how should I—such as I? It would of course take a man to do that," murmured Régine. Her humility was disarming and he failed to catch the mockery back of it. Then came a crushing question. "But my poor friend, how then will you get to your duchess when she is at Grex?"

"It is on the way to the frontier, is it not?" he demanded.

"Exactly, but how do you propose to get there? It is of that that I came to speak," she said in brisk common sense. "*Poverino mio*, it can not be done, not your way. No, let me talk," she interposed, as he mouthed a protest. "I know what I say. Who should know better than I and the old Amato? All my life I have wandered with him, at first like a butterfly, without thought or heed, asking only sun and flowers. But after these last four years—think you that because I sing and dance, because I wear this dress, I have not seen? I tell you it can not be done, not by you."

She stood there, gazing up at him, never flinching as the sodden poplars rained drops on her bared shoulders. The faint light was kind to her finery, accentuating her frailness, softening the effrontery of the fly-by-night *jongleuse*. Gradually Vallator became aware of a charm in her; a charm as elusive as the fleeting patches of cloud-chased moonlight.

"I know just what you plan," Régine went on. "To walk by night and lie hid by day. But it can not be done, not by you at least; you would be no more than a rat in a country of cats."

"Then what shall I do?" he asked.

"It is to that that I am coming. Listen, then, there are but three ways to be safe in these days. First—to be dead."

"I'd almost as soon be," he muttered.

"Bah, one can always be that. Every hour for these four years I have faced, saying to myself—'Régine, *ma folle*, you have lived this last hour, then you can live this next also. After that we will see. And *voyez donc*—I am still alive."

"Well, we will cancel that—for an hour," Vallator agreed.

"The second safety is to be in prison. That you have cast away. And since the first two ways are of no use, we come to the third."

"And that is?"

"To be mad."

"It seems I am that already," he laughed harshly.

"But not mad enough, my friend," she replied. "Now listen. While you were out here I have been asking things of the old Amato, and those *poilus*, and they all admit that Ibn Geburah was right in much of what he said. They have all seen men, poor crazed creatures, wandering about claiming to be this or that. I have seen those who claimed to be Napoleon, or the angel Gabriel, or what you please. And always they passed safely amidst the pity of the people. You shall do the same."

"By George, that's an idea," Vallator ejaculated. "I'll try it."

"But not alone," she hastily put in. "It is with us that you shall come, with the old Amato and myself."

"But I can not be a burden upon you," he protested.

"You shall help to carry our burdens instead. The drum is getting too heavy for the poor old man. We are known in this country; for years we traveled it, playing the village fêtes. Scaramouche and Columbine, that is how they know us here."

"But what of me?" he asked.

"You shall be some poor mad soul we picked up. You shall shamble along and every now and then cry out and proclaim yourself to be——"

"Napoleon," he suggested, as she paused in thought.

"No, that is too banal. We must have something new."

She bent her head, a golden tassel of her dress caught between her teeth. Then suddenly she lit up with all the brilliance of a great idea.

"*Ecco*, I have it. The latest fashion in madness. You shall proclaim yourself to be the Voice of Verdun."

The silence was profound as she watched for some sign of approval from him. Then it broke as he fell back against the tree trunk, sending down a shower of scattering drops as he shook it with his laughter.

"Very well," he gasped from the midst of that biting crackle of sheer irony.

"Have it your own way. Behold me—*La Voix de Verdun*."

IV

IT WAS toward the close of a brilliant day that Vallator, with Amato and Régine traversed a by-way toward Grex.

An odd party they made as they trudged onward between the budding vineyards. Amato in the lead, wrapped in a black cloak as with a toga, his head bent, his lips moving in the garrulous self-communings of age. Next came Régine, in a patched skirt, a shawl of faded crimson about her shoulders, her sole baggage the little bundle containing her treasured dancing dress. But from one ear a knot of peach bloom cast warm reflections on the warm pallor of her cheek, her eyes sparkled with the delight of her beloved South, and with each step came the jingle of her tambourine, so that she seemed to move in an aura of warm light and merry sound.

Last of all Vallator, bent under the drum, shuffling awkwardly in wooden shoes. A fantastic figure in the careful camouflaging of his sanity. A pair of ancient corduroy trousers, above them his uniform tunic, rent and stained. On the blond disarray of his hair a cap surmounted by a plume of curled paper, across his breast a row of medals, cut from tin or purchased for a few *sous* from a children's toy shop.

He hated them the most of all and their constant tinkle above his heart was a sting

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to his ears. The whole disguise, with its implication of madness, was like a slime upon his flesh, but it had proven effective, bringing him only pity instead of suspicion.

Régine stopped, flinging herself down in the shade of a wayside olive; Amato sinking beside her into the ready doze of senility.

"We must rest, then dress," she announced. "The town is around that bend."

"What, are we so near to Grex as that?" asked Vallator, and she looked up at him with a mocking gleam.

"Still thinking of the duchess, *hein?*"

Vallator glanced blackly down at himself and that hated row of medals across his chest, furious again at the ignominy of his position.

"IT IS of my message to her I am thinking."

"That of course is understood," she shrugged.

"It is for France," he persisted and she plucked a violet from the grass and threw it at him.

"That speech deserves a bouquet—no?"

"You think I am acting?" he demanded.

"I do not think you could," she laughed; then came a shower of violets, a ripple of merriment. "Oh, sit down and rest yourself, and do not be so always *le grand hero.* You look so funny."

"And who was it made me look so?" he retorted.

He flushed as he remembered the risk she was running in thus disguising him; and that, but for that disguise, he would have inevitably been arrested, with consequences there was no telling.

In breaking from that detention camp he had felt like a chicken breaking from its shell. But to what does a chicken hatch, after all, but the liability of an ax? He flung himself down, biting blackly at a stalk of wheat, his mind aflame with a bitter question. 'Who started this mess of a world anyhow?'—If he could only get his hands on that responsible party!

"*Ah, mon pauvre,* I know, I know," murmured Régine, her hand resting on his hair in the magnetism of a perfect understanding. "But remember that in this *comédie humaine* nothing lasts forever and each hour brings us nearer the end."

"But what is the end?" he asked drearily.

"Who knows? But I can see it coming, softly as the spring steals northward, and as good."

"The day I believe that I will die," she answered. "The good—ah—it means that for which we all wait and long and believe. But now," her tone grew brisk, "we must dress and get ready for business. That is Eaux Chaudes de Croy over there and we should pick up many francs to-night. There is a military hospital there that the convalescents may drink the waters."

He rose, resuming his drum in dreary acquiescence, and she regarded him in professional criticism. "You look too sensible, I must do your eyes."

She held his chin, letting fall into each eye a drop of belladonna. In a few moments they changed, giving him a stare of fixed blackness.

"Now drop your jaw, dangle your wrists and take that spring from your walk. I go to dress behind those bushes."

An hour later they were in Croy. As she had told him that night at the inn, "il Gran' Amato" and "la Gina Antonelli" were well known throughout the Midi. Their *billets d'identité* were waved aside with welcoming smiles and Régine's voluble explanation of Vallator fell on friendly ears. It was the largest town they had adventured as yet and Vallator knew that if he passed successfully through this crowd of military convalescents he would pass anywhere.

It was in the square that they took their stand and as the crowd gathered about them Vallator carefully played his part. A shambling creature he looked, banging his drum without rhythm or meaning, until Régine turned on him in exasperation, then back to the throng with a tap of the head and a grimace.

That crowd was hers to do with as she pleased, aided by old Amato, reviving under the stimulus of performance.

The sunset faded and the lamps twinkled in the little *place.* Quaint gables against the darkening sky, the rustle of leaves in the southern dusk, the murmur of the crowd, and three chance-met vagabonds—Chance, Charm and Escape, laughing their way across a war-riven land, to the tune of Régine's chanson:

"C'est mon ami. Rendez le moi.
"J'ai son amour. Il à ma foi."

For a moment Vallator thought he had found that for which all the world so longs. Romance, that misty ideal which too often dissolves when grasped with greedy hands. Incautiously he allowed a light to come on his face and struck a genuine rhythm on the drum; and at once, before Régine's glance of warning could reach him, came an instant of danger from a man in the crowd: A Breton *poilu,* his natural surliness increased by his wounds; one eye obscured by a black patch, the other boring at Vallator like a gimlet of suspicion, as though affronted by the spectacle of a body still whole while his own was so mutilated.

"And that *poisson* there, why is he *embusqué* like this?" he demanded.

AT THE words Vallator felt himself the sudden center of all eyes, then Régine leaped before him.

"Do you then doubt our poor Michel?" she asked, in a hand-on-hip insolence. "*Oh là, là,* he is crazy, yes."

"Crazy, is he?" grumbled the Breton. "He has at least sense enough to keep his legs."

"But he has lost his poor head. If you had done the same you might not miss it so much," Régine retorted.

There came a heartening grin from the listeners and she seized her advantage.

"Come then, Michel," she coaxed, approaching Vallator. "Sing for these messieurs and tell them who you are."

It was the moment they had foreseen must some time come and against which they had rehearsed. But now it was here he seemed incapable of motion as those eyes all focused upon him again.

"Make them your speech, my Michel." Régine prompted, covering the quiver of her tones with a laugh. "You remember it. '*Je suis la*——'"

Under that focused stare of the crowd even the fear of discovery seemed to have left him, swallowed up in that desire to run and hide. Pure stage fright, he knew, that paralysis of an amateur, and he struggled to utter those rehearsed words.

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"Is he not droll then, this poor Michel?" Régine demanded of the crowd, moving nearer, her hand busy with an ornament pinned in her hair.

"*Eh vaurien?* Have you lost your tongue then?" she asked, with a peal of ringing laughter, but at the same instant came a cruel thrust in his leg.

The shock s nt him into the air with a cry of surprise that brought laughter from the crowd and under cover of it Régine returned to her hair the pin with which she had aroused him.

The fog had now cleared from Vallator's brain; if he must be insane then insane he would be, in good measure, if only for the sake of these who had befriended him. Releasing the drum he cast himself upon the ground, writhing convulsively, keeping that fixed, dilated stare upon the crowd.

It was scalding to his physical pride as he contemplated the picture he must make. A writhing, demented creature biting at the dust. But he knew the danger discovery would bring to Régine. She stood above him, slim and pliant, her seeming mockery of him but a part of her protection as she held that invisible finger of the trained actress upon the subjective pulse of the crowd.

"Come then, a few more *sous* and he shall sing for you," she cried, shaking her tambourine as she circled the front rank.

"Just a *sou*—ah, thank you monsieur, it is always the handsomest who are the most generous. A little *sou* to hear—no, *mon brave*, keep your kisses for those who want them, if there be any such. Come then—who would hear the great voice?—only a *sou*."

Pocketing the coins in pretended rapacity she came back, singing sarcastically:

"Et par sa voix tendre et plaintive,
Il charme l'écho de vos bois."

You see it was of him I sang, and now his voice shall charm you. Come then, Michel. *'Je suis la Voix'*—"

"I am the Voice——"

THE words choked in Vallator's throat. A shift had come in the crowd as it parted to permit a woman to pass to the front. A woman of a different station from the mass about her, clad in palest gray, a knot of violets at her waist, a violet hat upon her brown hair. Her presence exhaled a dainty simplicity, yet without any hint of coquetry. She seemed to dress exquisitely from a sense of high duty, knowing the heartening effect, in these days, of the sight of a beautiful woman. Her nationality was plain, though softened by foreign art and training; the cool intellect and white purpose of America combined with the deliberate charm of France.

Ella Cray; Duchess d'Abrantez; the woman who for four years had been the secret ideal of Vallator's life, three times changing its whole course.

For the first time her eyes were consciously upon him and in this the lowest moment of all. He knew the picture he must present to her, crouching there in the dust in his paper plumes and tin medals.

"But come then, Michel," Régine prompted again, hardly able to conceal her anxiety. "Make them your speech."

The pity in those violet eyes was an added outrage, scorching every nerve with the desire to spring to his feet, tear off those debasing medals and claim the clean sanity that was really his. But then, what might not that bring upon this girl and the old man? It had to be done and he rushed at it in bitter determination.

"I am the Voice of Verdun."

There was a murmur from the crowd. This was beyond laughter and there was a pitying concern as Vallator forced from his lungs those travesties of sound he had rehearsed. Shutting her ears with a quick motion of her hands the Duchess spoke:

"But the poor fellow is mad."

"Of a certainty, madame," replied Régine. "Ah—listen to him."

VALLATOR was continuing, though with every ridiculous sound he felt something leaving him. His life blood it seemed, he could almost feel it dripping and he wondered why the ground was not red. But perhaps it was only his pride, and he sank prone in the dust.

"He is mad all right," growled the Breton, in self-satisfaction. "I would not be as he is, not for twenty arms and legs."

"But why is he here?" asked Ella d'Abrantez. "He has been a soldier, he has offered his reason for our country, he should not be made a public spectacle."

They stood there, just above him, the two women who had been of most import in his life. Two women in almost violent contrast to each other.

"If madame but knew the story," Régine began, with a curtsy of humility.

"I mean to know it before I leave here. How comes he with such people as you?"

"He was so unhappy in the hospital, madame," Régine went glibly on. "He longed so for our South, so we—the old Amato, there, and I—we obtained permission to bring him away with us. Ah, the poor one, he was truly miserable in that hospital. The nurses—but then, no doubt, he was a little trying at times."

A shrugged shoulder painted a picture of tired women, their professional patience breaking down under a continual exasperation. Then Régine rushed on, weaving her gossamer tissue of fiction.

"We are old friends, Michel and I. He clung so to me, longing to come away with us, so we begged that he might do so."

"That you might exhibit him for money?" the Duchess demanded icily.

"That was the fault of these men, madame. They thought he was just pretending madness and I had to convince them lest they hurt him."

"Has he no papers, then?"

"Of a certainty, but how do I know that these *vauriens* here can even read?" Régine asked, with a glance of contempt at the crowd.

"He must be protected, in another hospital if necessary."

There was a command in the other woman's tone which warned Régine that she must play her highest card. Her eyes widened in appeal and her breast swelled with a strangling sob.

"Ah, do not take him from me—it is so much to have him, even as he is. Oh, madame, you who are so beautiful, who have everything, have pity, for I have nothing—nothing but him."

"You love him, then?" Ella d'Abrantez asked more gently.

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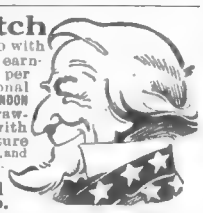

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Helplessly Vallator waited, unable to do more than sit vacant-eyed in the dust and accept whatever story Régine chose.

If it had only been to some other woman that she spoke. What a mess it all was, and what an actress the girl was as she crumpled at the other woman's feet in a heap of supplication.

Sheer art, of course; what else could it be? Vallator tingled again as he saw himself branded, in those violet eyes, as the sentimental property of this singing girl.

"Love excuses much," said the duchess bending over Régine. "Here I have no authority, being only a visitor for a day, but if you will come to me at Grex I will see what can be done for you both."

"Madame is so good," murmured Régine, and the other dropped a five-franc note in her hand.

"This will pay your lodging for the night. Take him away from here and keep him quiet."

SHE turned and the throng closed again as she passed, shutting her from view. Her going was at once a pain and a relief to Vallator, like the passing of something too brilliant to be borne.

The little *place* was the same, yet changed. Quaint gables dark against the sky, the twinkle of lamps through the southern dusk; but romance had fled and the bat wings of danger hovered over them as they crept away and down the twisting gloom of a side street. There was a river at the end, crossed by an ancient bridge, and under its flying arch of stone they came to a halt.

Amato sank down into his usual apathy, and Régine flung herself beside him, flushed and panting.

"*Gia*, we have done it," she exclaimed triumphantly. "Nothing that comes can be worse than that."

"You were wonderful," said Vallator quietly.

"Too wonderful, *hein?*" she asked, as she caught the reserve in his tone. "You did not like it that I spoke so to that woman?" She sprang up, dimpling, her eyes shining in silent laughter.

"*Mère de Dieu.* Can it be? Oh—I believe that that was your dear duchess!"

His silence confirmed her and she choked again with merriment. A sprite she looked, just then, poised in her attire of stage artifice against the black and silver of the river with its rows of ghostly poplars. There came to him once the contrast between her and the woman whose name she had just spoken. A contrast as great as between those stars, regal in the sky, and the rays of them fallen among the mud of the river bank. He wondered vaguely how much those little dancing starsheens down there were tainted by the black waters from which they shone.

The Duchess d'Abrantez. At the thought of her, cool and serene in her gray and violet, an angry tide rose in him. He tore the paper plumes from his cap and snatched from his breast that row of ridiculous medals.

"There will be no more of this," he blazed at Régine.

"Because it hurt you to have that woman see you so?"

She laughed cruelly as he ground the offending things with his heel. As her laugh grew shrill he caught at her shoulders, bringing her face to face with him.

"I believe you just put those things on me to see how much I would stand—you little devil."

Her shoulders were so frail that he could have crushed them with his hands, but she stood unafraid.

"Oh, see then, our Michel arises. And I had thought him dead and buried, with a stone at his head—'Here lies poor Michel.'"

"I'll show you if I'm dead or not. After this I go as I really am."

"But you can not follow us without disguise."

"Any following will have to be done by you," he said, releasing her abruptly. "I go my own way and tell the truth."

"Michel, it was really for your sake," she pleaded. "I knew how you suffered under it, and I suffered with you. But I saw no other way."

"I do, and I shall take it," he answered, turning from her, and she pursued him with fluttering hands.

"But where do you go?"

"To the river to bathe myself. I feel as though I could never be clean again."

He left her, plunging on through the sedges, hardly able to wait before washing away the slime of that scene in the square.

Régine returned to the arch, gazing in sullen silence over the winding river. A familiar thing to her to sit thus, with old Amato, in whatever shelter the night might bring.

Amato woke from his doze, looking with his nodding head and gaudy rags, like some bright-plumaged bird of prey.

"Is he gone?" he whispered.

"He will come back."

"Then listen. Why do we drag him about like this, a danger to us? He is some one of importance, that boy, yes."

"I know it," she nodded.

"There must be a reward offered for his arrest," the old man went on, his breath hot and rancid with the fire of greed which had temporarily aroused him from his apathy. "Why not give him up to the authorities? We should get money and a free pass to go where we please."

Régine sprang up, hovering about like an angry dove facing a hawk.

"Give him up! You dare to say it," she shrilled. "No, you need not cringe. I am not going to strike you. I remember all that you have done for me; that for twenty years you have been to me as a father. But I swear to you that if you touch him I will—oh, I am afraid myself of what I might not do."

A SQUALID scene as she bent above him in her fury; the strident quarrel of two beggars hiding like water-rats under a bridge, but in Régine's anger was a flame which lifted it above its surroundings.

"No, no, *cara nina mia*," wailed Amato, lifting hands of quivering protest. "I did not mean it. I swear I did not."

"Then what did you mean?" she demanded inexorably.

"I did not know that you loved him."

"What! I—love him?"

Régine's cry filled the arch, followed by peal of metallic laughter.

"These years with you have taught me to love none but myself," she declared, with a stamp of furious denial.

Then, to prove her words, she turned and, with hands pressed to her breast, fled out into the night.

Concluded in the March EVERYBODY'S.

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IN RED *and* GOLD

(*Continued from page 62*)

escapades of the younger Rocky there had always been a reticence if never a restraint. It was precocity; the blood that was in him.

"You beautiful, wonderful girl!" he was breathing close to her ear. (He was never to forget this.) "How can you hide your feelings from me like this? Can't you see it's just driving me mad? You're adorable! You're exquisite! You thrill me so—just your voice; the way you walk—your hands—your hair! Can't you understand, dear, it isn't what they call 'love'?" (This with a divine contempt.) "It's the cry of my whole being. I want to give you my life. I want to know *your* life—study it—come to understand the wonderful people that have made you possible! I'm going to study it—history, art, everything! I worship you! I dream so of you—all the time—daytime! I just half-close my eyes and then right away I can see you, walking. And I see you as you were at the dance on the boat." He choked a little, then rushed on. "And in those dreams I always take you in my arms— No, let me say it! The angels are singing it, the wonderful truth! I take you in my arms and kiss your hair and your eyes. You always close your eyes—oh, so slowly—and I press my lips on the lids. And your arms are around my neck. I can feel your hands. But I never kiss your lips—not in those dreams. Because that will mean that you have given me your soul, and I always know I must wait for that.

"Please! You must listen! Can't you see I'm just tearing my heart out and putting it in your hands—under your feet? There isn't any other life for me. I can't live without you. I could give up my friends, my home, my country, and be happy just serving you."

HE HAD captured her hand; had it tight in his two hands and was kissing it tenderly. The thrill was unbelievable now. It was ecstasy. He could hear himself murmuring over and over, "You're so exquisite! You're thrilling! I love the way your hair lies over your forehead. I love your eyes, especially when you smile. . . ." On and on.

The tired, sad girl in the steamer chair could not fail to respond in some measure, in every sensitive nerve, to so ardent a wooing. Even when she rose, and struggled a little to withdraw her hand, she couldn't be angry. He was, in his very boyishness, compelling.

Then, a little later, he was sitting moodily on the extension front of the chair, face in hands, plunged into a wordless abyss; she sitting on the edge of the steersman's deck, leaning against the rail, her face close to a lotus plant, with one flower that looked a ghostly blue in the fading moonlight, and just later, shaded through pink to deep red with the first quick-spreading color of the dawn. His emotional outburst had passed, for the moment, like a gust. He seemed to himself, already, to have failed. His thoughts were turned, behind the gray, half-covered face, on death. For so swung the pendulum. He couldn't, in these depths, draw significance from the remarkable fact that she

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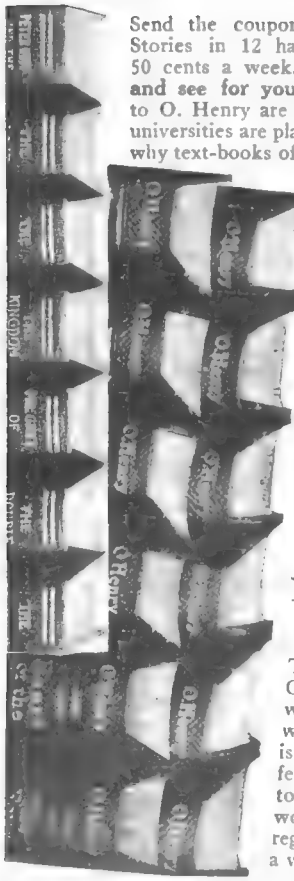

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had risen only to drop down again and carry forward the talk that he let fall, that he had, for the time, at least, swept away those mental obstacles. Certainly Miss Hui Fei was not elusive now.

VII

THE things she was saying, in a deliberate, matter of fact way, bewildered him.

"I don't want you to make love to me like tha'."

"But how can I help it? You're so wonderful. You thrill me so. I tell you it's my whole life. I can never live on without you—not any more. It's got to be with you, or—or nothing."

It was strange. This impulsive affection had grown very, very rapidly within him; yet, even a day earlier he couldn't have pictured this scene. Not a phrase of these burning sentences he was so fervently uttering had been consciously framed in his mind. A part of the thrill of the situation lay in the very fact that he was so wildly committing himself. Now that it was being said, he felt no desire to take a word back. He meant it all; and more—more.

But she, still, even in the telltale morning light, quaint, charming, adorable, was growing so practical about it.

"You're a ver' romantic boy."

"I'm not! This is real! Can't you understand that it's love—forever?"

"Please! I don' want you to think I don' un'erstan'. It's ver' sweet an' generous of you——"

"I'm not generous! I *want* you!"

"I do apprecia' all it woul' mean. You offer me so much——"

"You dear girl, I offer you everything—everything I have or am! I don't want to live at all unless it's with you always at my side."

"But I don' think— Please! I woul'n't hurt you for anything. You've helped so—helped saving my father's life an' mine. It's won'erful—but I don' think life is like that. People mus' have so much in common to marry in the Western way. They mus' love each other, yes. But in their min's an' feelings they mus' share so much—their backgroun's . . ."

He was out of the chair now; was beside her on the deck.

"Listen!" he was huskily saying. "We'll get married right away in Shanghai. We've got to! I won't let you say no! And then we won't go back. We'll stay out here. There'll be money enough, in spite of the pater. We'll study this East together. I'm going to devote all the rest of my life to it. We'll build our common interest. I shall never want anything else!"

"How do you know that?"

"Can you doubt me?" He had both her hands now. He seemed so young, so eager. He would fight for what he greatly desired, as his father had fought before him. However crudely, boyishly, he would fight.

"No"—her own voice was, surprisingly, a little unsteady—"of course I don' doubt you. But how can you know what you're going to wan'—years from now? I don' un'erstan' that. It does seem pretty romantic to me. I don' know for myself. I coul'n' tell."

This, or perhaps it was her failure to rise to his ecstasy, plunged him again into the depths. How moody he was!

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"It's you or nothing now," he repeated. "You or nothing."

"Wha' do you mean by that?"

"I've got to have you. If I can't, I'll—Oh, I guess I'll just drop quietly overboard. What's the use."

"Do you think it's fair to talk li' that?"

"Perhaps not, but—I guess I'm beside myself."

"Listen!" said she now; with a friendly, even sympathetic pressure of his trembling hands, "I'll tell you what I think. I think the thing for you to do is to go back to college."

This stung him. "How can you talk like that," he cried, "when——"

"I don' wan' to hurt you. But please try to think this as I want you to."

"Haven't you *any* feeling for me?"

"Of course, an' I'm ver' grateful."

"For God's sake, don't talk like that!"

There was a pause. He withdrew his hands; plunged his feverish face into them.

She rose, very wearily. Said, "I'm going to try to sleep."

"And you could go? Leaving it like this?"

"Please! I can't help——"

"Oh, I understand—" he was on his feet before her; caught her arms in his hands that now were firm and young—"I haven't moved you yet, that's all. But I will. We Kanes aren't quitters. We don't give up. And I'm not going to give you up. I'm going to win you. Can't you see that I've got to? That I can't live— Listen! You're the loveliest, daintiest little girl in the world. Your voice is music to me. I've got to live my life to that music. It'll be beautiful! Can't you see that? I don't care how much time it takes. I'll settle down to it. But I'll win you. And we'll be married at Shanghai!"

HE WAS very nearly irresistible now. The power in him was real. She broke away; then, a surprise to herself, lingered. Strangely to her, this ardent, still somewhat impossible boy, with his vital, Western force, had actually created an atmosphere of romance in which she was, for the moment, and in a degree, enveloped. She knew, clearly enough, that she must exert herself to escape from it; but lingered.

He caught her hands again; covered them with kisses; held them firmly while his eyes, suddenly radiant, sought hers and, during a moving instant, held them.

She went below then. And Rocky dropped into the steamer chair and smiled exultantly as he drifted into slumber.

When they met again, away from the others, after an excellent luncheon of fowl and vegetables prepared by the surprising Miss Carmichael, his mood was wholly changed. He had charm; consciously or unconsciously, he made it felt.

"I wasn't fair to you," he began.

"If you don't min'," said she, "we jus' won't talk abou' that."

"Can't help it." He smiled a little. "There's no use pretending I can think about another thing. I'm madly in love with you—hopelessly gone. It'll probably simplify things if you'll just accept that as a fact. But last night—this morning—whenever it was!—after all we'd been through—you know, perhaps it wasn't so unnatural that I got all fired up that way."

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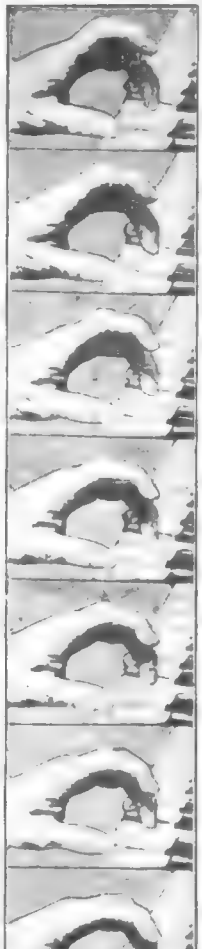

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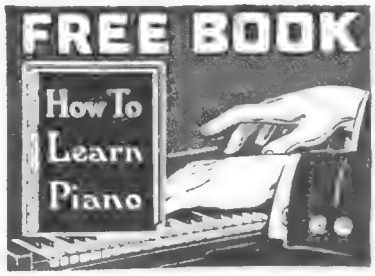

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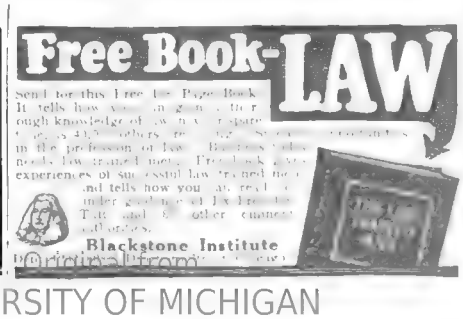

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to manage than the ardent boy of the glowing dawn, she was silent.

"Here's the thing," he went on. "I was too worn out myself to be any way considerate of you. I meant every word, of course. You'll never know how wonderful you seem to me." This rather wistfully. They were leaning on the rail, gazing at the rocky hills along the southern bank. "It's all wrong for me to be so impatient. I know I've got to make good. I've got to earn you. That won't come all at once. But I am going to try not to get stirred up like that again. God knows you've got enough to bother you."

"I'm ver' uncertain abou' my father," said she.

"How do you mean?"

"Oh—he stays in his room. He doesn't come out with us. An' he's always working."

"Well—does that mean anything? Wouldn't he naturally be busy?"

"I don't think so. No' like this."

"But I don't understand what——"

"It isn't easy to say. When a man like father—what you call a mandarin—feels that he mus'—" her voice wavered—"that he mus' go, there is a grea' deal that he must wri' to his frien's an' to the governmen'. He doesn' wan' to be disturb'. I can' tell wha' he's doing. It worries me."

VIII

DOANE, during the sunny dreamy afternoon, heard them, now and again. They were quite monopolizing the pleasant after gallery. And they were drifting on into their love-story. He could not restrain himself from watching and listening. Despite the fact that his own dream was over, Doane felt about it, in his heart, like a boy. The sight of her quickened his pulse. Thoughts of her—mental pictures—came irresistibly. And these, at times, puzzled his heart if never his reason; the moment on the after deck of the steamer, when she climbed the after ladder and first confided her tragic difficulty; the dance she "sat out" with him. He called himself, often enough, a fool. But his spirit refused to accept the words that formed in his mind. He was simply at war with himself. The sort of thing happened often enough in life, of course. Every man lived through such periods. Thus he fell back, over and again, on reason. It was all he could do. Plainly the experience would take a lot of living through.

To hope that her quick youth could altogether resist Rocky's ardent youth was asking too much, of course. The young people were almost certain to find themselves helpless—their emotions stirred by what they had been living through; thrown together here on the junk, picturesquely, romantically. Whatever little difficulties they might encounter in exploring each other's nascent feelings would be softened by the very air they were breathing. The young are often, usually, helpless when nature so works upon them. But Doane wasn't bitter. At times he nearly convinced himself that he felt only concern lest they rush along too fast; surrender their hearts, only to find too late that the necessary affinity was not growing into flower. The boy must have some proving, of course. That lovely girl mustn't be sacrificed.

Late in the afternoon they were singing, softly, even humorously. Doane caught snatches of "Mandalay," and the college songs. That would seem to them a fine bond, of course—the mere causal fact that both knew the songs. For youth is quite as simple as that. So they were rushing on with it, while an older man pondered. Rocky hung unashamed on her every word, every movement; waited forlornly about whenever she went below; starting at sounds, sinking into moods, and shining with radiance when she reappeared. He even had gentle moments. What girl could be insensible to all that? He himself was avoiding them, of course. There was no helping that; certainly in this stage of the romance.

His Excellency appeared on deck during the second afternoon; greeted Doane in friendly fashion—looking oddly simple in his servant costume; blue gown, plain cloth slippers, skull cap. They walked the deck together; later, they sat on a coil of rope. In manner he was very nearly his old self; smiling a thought less, perhaps, but as humanly direct in his talk as a Chinese.

"We shall soon be parting, Griggsby Doane," he remarked, "and I shall think much of you. Do you know yet where you shall go and what you shall do?"

"No," Doane replied. "All I can do now is the next thing, whatever that may prove to be."

"You will help China."

"I shall hope for an opportunity."

"You are, first and last, a Westerner."

"I suppose that is true."

"I did think you a philosopher, Griggsby Doane. So you seemed to me. Like our humble great, almost like Confucius himself. But in the moment of crisis your nature found expression wholly in action. At such times we are likely to be negative. We are a static people. But you, like your own, are dynamic."

This shrewd bit of observation struck Doane sharply. Come to think, it was true.

"At the critical moment you wasted not one thought in reflection. You weighed none of the difficulties; you ignored consequences. You took command. You acted. As a result—here we are. I suppose you were right. At any rate, I yielded to your active judgment. It has saved my daughter."

"And you, as well, your Excellency, if I may say so."

"VERY well—myself too. I shall always think of you now as I have twice seen you—once in that curious boxing match on the steamer; and again as you took command of me and my own house. I regret that in my position as a Manchu, however progressive, I can not be of any considerable service to you with the republicans. It is in their camp that your advice will help. Only there. Shall you go to them?"

Doane found it impossible to mention the secret invitation of Sun-Shi-Pi. That would be a sacred confidence. So he replied in merely general terms:

"I should like to sit in their councils. They seem to represent, at this time, China's only material hope. Though I am not strongly an optimist regarding the revolution, China is so vast, so sunken in tradition, that the real revolution must be

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distressingly slow. Still, I have some familiarity with the constitutional history of my own country, and, I think, some acquaintance with yours. And I love China. Yes, I should like to help."

"You are a great man, Griggsby Doane. You have known sorrow and poverty. To the merely successful American I do not look for much real guidance. But China needs you. I hope she will find you out in time."

They talked on, of many things. His Excellency was gently, at times even whimsically, reflective. At length he touched, lightly at first, on the subject of Rocky Kane. A little later, more openly, he asked what the boy's standing would be in New York.

Doane thought this over very carefully. It was curious how that confusing element of mere feeling reappeared promptly in his mind. But he explained, finally, that while the boy was young, and had been passing through a phase of rather adventurous wildness, still his father was a man of enormous prestige in society as in the financial world. The boy had nice qualities. Given the right influence he might, with the wealth that would one day be his, become like his father, a powerful factor in American life.

"I find myself somewhat puzzled," remarked his Excellency then. "He seems devoted to my daughter. I can not easily read her mind. And I would not attempt to direct her life as would be necessary had she been merely a Manchu girl reared in a Manchu environment. Is she, do you think, and as your people understand the term, in love with him?"

"It would be difficult to say, your Excellency—" thus Doane, simply and gravely. "The young man is, of course, in love with her."

"Ah," breathed his Excellency. "You are sure of that?"

"Yes. She is undoubtedly accustomed to play about pleasantly with young men, as do the young women of America." Sudden, poignant memories came of his own lovely daughter, as she had been, and of the puzzling romance that had seemed for a time to injure her young life—a romance in which he, her father, had played a strange part. But that was, after all, but an echo from another life; a closed book.

"YOUR daughter, I am sure," Doane continued, "can be trusted to form her own attachments. She is a noble as well as a beautiful girl."

"Indeed—you find her so, Griggsby Doane? That is pleasant to my ears. For into the directing of her life have gone my dreams of the new China and the new world. I would not have her choose wrongly now. But I do not understand her. It is difficult for me to talk freely with her."

"I am sure," said Doane slowly, "that if you could bring yourself to do so—" as once or twice before, in moments of deep feeling, he forgot to use the indirect Oriental form of address—"it would make her very happy."

"You think that, Griggsby Doane?" His Excellency considered this. Then added—"I will make the effort."

"If I may suggest—talk with her not as father with daughter, but on an equality, as friend with friend."

His Excellency slowly rose; and Doane, also rising, felt for the first time that the fine old statesman fully looked his age. He was, standing there, smiling a thought wistfully, an old man, little short of a broken man. And then his dry thin hand found Doane's huge one and gripped it in the Western manner. This was a surprise, evidently as moving to T'ang as to Doane himself; for they stood thus a moment in silence.

"My dearest hope, of late," said the great Manchu—the smooth crust of etiquette giving way, for once, before the pressure of emotion—"has been that my daughter's heart might be given to you, Griggsby Doane."

Again a silence. Then Doane—

"That was my hope, as well."

"Then——"

"No. It is plainly impossible. All life is before her; I am quite old enough to be her father. The thought has not come to her. It never will. I see now that she could not be happy with me. And I think she ought to be happy. I must ask you not to speak of this again. Let youth call unto youth. And let me be her friend."

HIS Excellency went below after this. Miss Hui Fei was also below, sleeping. Rocky Kane had been playing with the little princess, out on the gallery; but now, watching his chance, he came forward to the informal seat the mandarin had vacated.

It was to be difficult—always difficult. The boy, plainly, couldn't live through these tense days without a confidant. Doane steeled himself to bear it, and to respond as a friend. There was no way out; would be none short of Shanghai; just an exquisite torture. It was even to grow, with each fresh contact, harder to bear. The boy was so curiously unsophisticated, so earnest and honest an egoist.

"I've told her," he said now.

Doane could only wait.

"She hasn't said yes. That would be absurd, of course—so soon." He was so pitifully putting up a brave front. "But she does like me. And it's something that she hasn't said no. Isn't it something?"

That was hardly a question; it was nearer assertion—what he had to think. Doane managed to incline his head.

"But never mind that. God knows why I should bother you with it. You've been so kind—such a friend. We—are friends, aren't we?"

Doane felt himself obliged to turn and meet his eyes. And such eyes! Ablaze with nervous light. And then he had to grip another hand—this one young, moist, strong. But he managed that, too.

"Listen! I do bother you awfully, but—I've been thinking—here we are, you know. God knows when I'll find a man who could help me as you can. And we brought all those wonderful old paintings aboard here. I've been thinking—well since I've got so much to learn of Chinese culture, why not begin? Couldn't I—would they mind if I looked at some of the pictures. And—if it isn't asking too much—you could tell me why they're good. Just begin to give me something to go by. Isn't it as good a way to make the break as any?"

It was a most acceptable diversion. Doane, though several boxes of the paintings were in his own room, sent a servant to ask a permission that was cordially granted. And as there was a wind blow-

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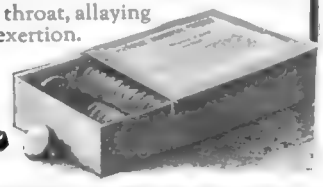

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ing, they went below, and talked then in low voices in order not to disturb the sleeping girl, while the elder man carefully opened a box and got out a number of the long scrolls that were wound on rods of ivory, handling them with delicately reverent fingers.

He choose one from the brush of that Chao Meng-fu who flourished under the earliest Mongol or Yuan rulers, a roll perhaps fourteen or fifteen inches in width and in length, judging from the thickness, as many feet, tied around with silk cords and fastened with tags of carven jade. The painting itself, naturally, was on silk, which in turn was pasted on thick, dark-toned paper, made of bamboo pulp, with borders of brocade. The projecting ends of the ivory rollers, like the tags, were carven.

There was no likelihood that the boy—lacking, as he was, in cultural background—would exhibit any sensitive responsiveness to the exquisite brush-work of the fine old painter or to his consciously subjective attitude toward his art. But there is a way in which the simple Western mind that is not preoccupied with fixed concepts of art may be led into enjoyment of such a landscape scroll; this is to exhibit it as do the Chinese themselves, unrolling, very slowly, a little at a time, deliberately absorbing the detail and the finely suggested atmosphere, until a sensation is experienced not unlike that of making a journey through a strange and delightful country. Doane employed this method, it was surely what that old painter intended—and led the boy slowly from a pastoral home, so small beneath its towering overhanging mountain crags, that lost themselves finally in soft cloud-masses, as to appear insignificant, out along a river where lines of reeds swayed in the winds and boats moved patiently, across a lake that was dotted with pavilions and pleasure craft—on and on, through infinitely varied scenes that yet were blended with amazing craftsmanship into a continuous, harmonious whole.

The time crept by and by. When Doane finally explained the seal characters at the end, and retied the old silk ribbons with their hanging rectangles of green jade, the sun was low over the western hills.

Rocky's face was flushed, his eyes nervously bright.

"I don't get it all, of course," he said; "but it makes you feel somehow as if you'd been reading 'The Pilgrim's Progress!'"

Doane gravely nodded.

"Shall we look at another?" said Rocky.

"No. That is enough. The Chinese know better than to crowd the mind with confused impressions of many paintings. A good picture is an experience to be lived through, not a trophy to be glanced at."

"I wonder," said the boy, "if that's why I used to hate it so when my tutor dragged me through the Metropolitan Museum."

"Doubtless."

"And this picture has a great value, I suppose?"

"It is virtually priceless—in East as well as West," replied Doane as he replaced it among its fellows in the box.

Thus began, late but perhaps not too late, what may be regarded as the education of young Rockingham Kane.

To be continued in the March EVERYBODY'S.

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IF WINTER COMES

(*Continued from page 39*)

not really very old. It seems a terrible age to me. You see, you judge age by what you are in contrast with what you were. If you're very happy I think it can't matter how old you are. If you look back to when you were happy and then come to the now when you're not, it seems a most terrible and tremendous gulf, and you see yourself just floating—drifting further and further away from the happy years and just being taken along, taken along, to God knows where, God knows to what." She put out the palms of her hands toward where misty evening banked somberly across the park. "That's very frightening, Marko."

The live thing ran beneath the leaves banked at their feet. A stronger gust came in the air. A scattering of leaves clustered together and moved with sudden agitation across the sward before them; paused and seemed to be trying to flutter a hold into the ground; rushed aimlessly at a tangent to their former direction; paused again, and again seemed to be holding on— Before a sudden gust they were spun haplessly upward, sported aloft in mazy arabesques, scattered upon the breeze.

"Those leaves!" she said. And as if she had not made the interjection she went on: "Most awfully frightening. Well, all the time there was you, Marko. You were always different from anybody I ever knew. Long ago I used to chaff you because you were so different. In those two years when we were away it got awful. In those two years I knew I was flotsam. One day—in India—I went and looked at it in the little dictionary in my writing-case, and I knew I was. Do you know what I did? I crossed out Flotsam in the dictionary and wrote Nona. There it was, and it was the most exact thing—'Nona: goods shipwrecked and found floating on the sea.' I meant to have torn out the page. I forgot. I left it there and Tony saw it."

SABRE said, "What did he say?" In all she had told him there was something omitted. He knew that his question approached the missing quantity. But she did not answer it.

She went on: "Well, there was you. And I began to want you most awfully. You were always such a dear, slow person; and I wanted that most awfully. You were so steady and good and you had such quaint old ideas about duty and rightness and things, and you thought about things so, and I wanted that most frightfully. You see, I'd known you all my life . . . Well, that's how it was, Marko. That explains all the things you asked. I said 'There'; and I said I had to come; because I'd wanted it so much, so long. And I wanted you to write to me because I did want to go on having the help I had from you——"

He had desired her to look at him, but it was he who had turned away. He sat with his head between his hands, his elbows on his knees.

She repeated, with rather a plaintive note, as though in his pose she saw some pain she had caused him: "You see, I had known you all my life, Marko."

He said, still looking upon the ground

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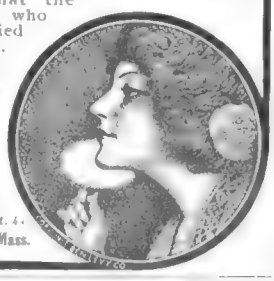

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between his feet: "But you haven't explained anything. You've only told me. You haven't explained why."

She said with astounding simplicity: "Well, you see, Marko, I made a mistake. I made a most frightful mistake. I chose. I chose wrong. I ought to have married you, Marko."

And his words were a groan: "Nona, Nona."

Chapter Twelve

Sabre Strikes His Tents

HE WAS presently walking back, returning to Tidborough.

He was trying very hard, all his life's training against sudden unbridling of his bridled passions, to grapple his mind back from its wild and passionate desires, and from its amazed coursings upon the immense prairies, teeming with hazards, fears, enchantments, hopes, dismays, that broke before this hour as breaks upon the hunter's gaze, amazingly awarded from the hill, savannas boundless, new, unpathed—from these to grapple back his mind to its schooled thought and ordered habit, to its well-trodden ways of duty, obligations, rectitude. He had not left them. But for that cry of her name wrung from him by sudden application of pain against whose shock he was not steeled, he had answered nothing to her lamentable disclosure. This which he now knew, these violent passions which now he felt, but lit for him more whitely the road his feet must take. If he had ever tried consciously to see his life and Mabel's from Mabel's point of view, now, when his mind threatened disloyalty to her, he must try. And would. The old habit, the old trick of seeing the other side acted never so strongly upon him as when unkindness appeared to lie in his own attitude. Unkindness was unfairness and unfairness was above all qualities the quality he could not tolerate. And here was unfairness, open, monstrous, dishonorable. Mabel should not feel it.

But he was aware, he was informed as by a voice in his ears: "You have struck your tents. You are upon the march."

II

HE APPROACHED the town. The school lay in this quarter and his way ran through its playing-fields and its buildings. Nature in her moods much fashioned his thoughts when he walked the countryside or rode his daily journey on his bicycle. He now carried his thoughts into her mood that stood about him.

Nature was to him in October, and not in spring, poignantly suggestive, deeply mysterious, in her intense and visible occupation. She was enormously busy; but she was serenely busy. She was stripping her house of its deckings, dismantling her habitation to the least and uttermost leaf; but she stripped, dismantled, extinguished, broke away, not in despair, defeat, but in ordered preparation and with exquisite certitude of glory anew. That, in October, was her voice to him, stirring tremendously that faculty of his of seeing more clearly, visioning life more poignantly with his mind than with his eye. She spoke to him of preparation for winter, and beyond winter with ineffable assurance for spring, bring winter what it might. He saw her dismantling all her house solely.

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to build her house again. She packed down. She did not pack up, which is confusion, flight, abandonment. She packed down, which is resolve, resistance, husbandry of power to build and burst again; and burst again—in stout affairs of outposts in sheltered banks and secret nooks; in swift, amazing sallies of violet and daffodil and primrose; in multitudinous clamor of all her buds in May; and last in her resistless tide and flood and avalanche of beauty to triumph and possession.

That was October's voice to him, that he apprehended, and tingled to it, as essence of its strange, heavy odors; secret of its veiling mists; whisper of its moisture-laden airs; song of its swollen ditches, brooks and runnels. It was not "Take down. It is done." It was "Take down. It is beginning."

Mankind, frail parasite of doubt, seeks ever for a sign, conceives no certainty but the enormous certitude of uncertainty. A sign! In death: "Take down, then; but leave me this—and this—for memory. Perhaps—who knows?—it may be true. But leave me this for memory." In promise: "So be it, then—but give me some pledge, some proof, some sign." Not thus October. October spoke to Sabre of nature's sublime imperviousness to doubt; of her enormous certainty, old as creation, based in the sure foundations of the world. "Take down. It is beginning."

Sabre used to think: "It gets you—terrifically. It's stupendous. It's too big to bear." He had this thought out of October. "You can't, *can't* walk along lanes or in woods in October and see all this mysterious business going on without knowing perfectly well that this astounding certainty must apply equally to human life. I'd wish the death of any one I loved to be in early autumn. No one can possibly *doubt* in early autumn. In winter, perhaps; and in spring and in summer you can know, cynically, it will pass. But in October—no. By God, no. And not only death. Life. Life as one lives it. You can't, *can't* feel in autumn that in the lowest depths there is lower yet. You only can feel, *know*, that the thing will break, that there's an uplift at the bottom of it all. There *must* be."

III

TAKE down; it is beginning. The spirit and the message of the season (as they communicated themselves to him) began, as opiate among enfevered senses, to steal about his thoughts. Had anything happened? His feeling was rather that he was at the beginning of something; or at the end of something, which was the same thing.

He had asked her: "Tell me about you and Tybar."

With pitiable gentleness of voice she had approached that quantity which had been missing from her first statement of her position. And she had done tribute to her husband's parts with generosity, nay, with pride. "Tony does everything better than any one else." She had said it on that occasion of their first reencounter; its burden had been the opening of her recital of what now she told.

"Marko, I think Tony's the most wonderful person that ever was. He does everything that men do and he does everything best. And everybody likes him. You've no idea. You've no idea how he wins everybody he meets. People will do anything for him. They love him. Well, you've only got to look at him, haven't you? Or hear him talk? I think there's never been any one so utterly captivating as Tony is to look at and to hear."

Most engagingly, with such words, she had presented him: one that passed through life airily, exquisitely; much fairy-gifted at his cradle with gifts of beauty, charm, preeminence in all he touched; knowing no care, knowing no difficulty, knowing no obstacle, or danger, or fear, or illness, or fatigue, or anything in life but gay and singing things, which touching, he made more bright, more tuneful yet; meeting no one, of whatever age or degree, but his charm was to that degree exactly touched; captivating all, leading all, by all desired in leadership. Fortune's darling!

"And, Marko," she at last had come to. "And, Marko—this is the word—graceless. Utterly, utterly graceless. Without heart, Marko, without conscience, without morals, without the smallest scrap of an approach to any moral principle. Marko, that's an awful, a wicked, an abominable thing for a wife to say of her husband. But he wouldn't mind a bit my telling you. Not a bit. He'd love it. He'd laugh. He'd utterly love to know he had stung me so much. And he'd utterly love to know he'd driven me to tell you. He'd think—he'd love like anything to drive me to do awful things. He's tried. Especially these two years. He'd love to be able to point a finger at me and laugh and say: 'Ah! Ha-Ha! Ah!' You know, he hasn't got any feelings at all—love or hate or anything else; and it simply amuses him beyond anything to arouse feeling in anybody else.

There have been women all the time we've been married and he simply amuses himself with them until he's tired of them, and until the next one takes his fancy, and he does it quite openly before me, in my house, and tells me what I can't see before my own eyes just for the love of seeing the suffering it gives me. You saw that Mrs. Winfred. He's done with her now. And he's as shameless about me with them as he is about them with me. And what he loves above all is the way I take it; and I can take it in no other way. You see I won't, I simply will not, Marko, let these women of his see—or let any one in the world suspect—that I—that I suffer. So when we are together before people I keep up the gay way we always show together. He loves it; it's delicious to him, because it's a game played over the torture underneath. And I won't do any other way, Marko. I will keep my face to the world. I won't have any one pity me."

"I pity you," he had said.

"Ah, you."

"If Winter Comes"
by A. S. M. Hutchinson
will be continued in the March EVERYBODY'S

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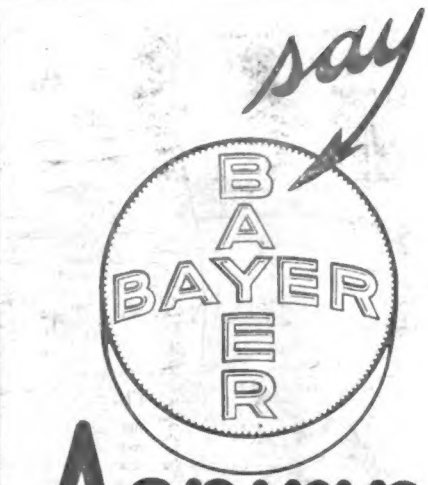

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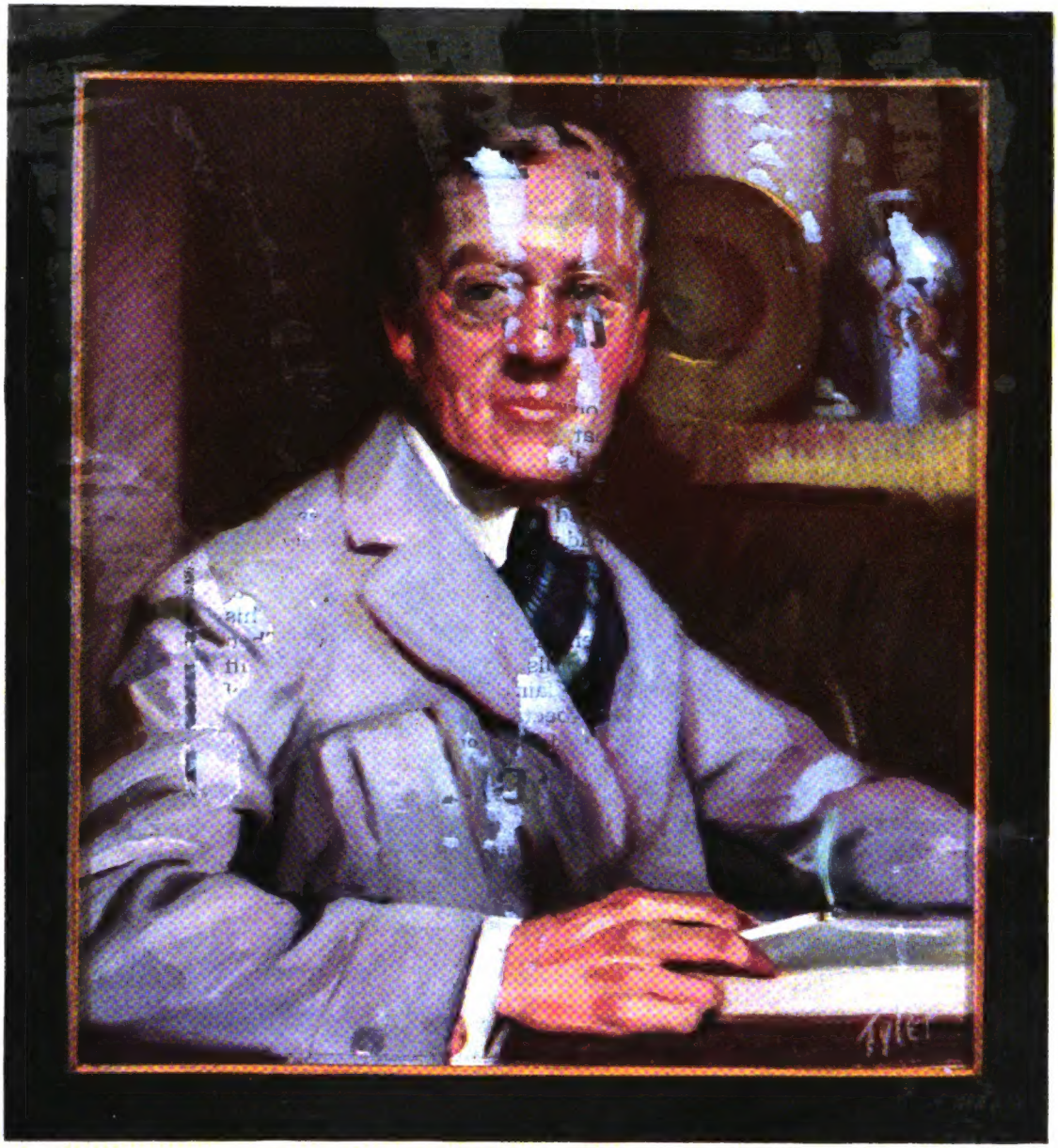

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COLUMBIA GRAPHOPHONE CO., NEW YORK
Canadian Factory, Toronto

Standard Models up to $300
Period Designs up to $2100

The Climax of Convenience

With the *exclusive Columbia Non Set Automatic Stop* there's nothing to move or set or measure. Just start the Grafonola and it plays and stops itself. Never stops before it should. Always stops at the very end. Dependable. Invisible. Silent.

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